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WORD AND PROCESS
A BARTHIAN-WHITEHEADIAN SOTERIOLOGY

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CHAPTER I

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS AND PRESUPPOSITIONS

To ask about human destiny, its circumstances, scope, and fulfillment, is to inquire into the evolving existence of all things, for certainly human existence is on a continuum with all lower forms of existence. At the same time, human existence manifests potentialities which lower forms of animal life, not to mention inanimate objects, do not approach. Furthermore, man ceases to be distinctively man without an element of hope toward which the lines of his existence converge; indeed, how animal life keeps going within its repetitive cycles, without visibly being compelled by anything that would be analogous to human hope, is a profound mystery to man, above and beyond the mystery of life, itself.

The hope which man seeks is not to be found in Nature, as may be verified by the despair of the Greeks whose cyclic view of history, analogous to the cyclic seasons of Nature, offered nothing to look forward to. This is to say that man's existence does not naturally have hope as one of its attributes. Man discovers himself to be existing, but the fact of his existence does not necessarily make him want to continue to exist. The reason is that man is never fully himself in the present; what he is must await a more complete future manifestation

and fulfillment, and the attainability of that future fulfillment may not be apparent.

When we speak of hope for man, we are making reference to man's astonishing faculty of self-transcendence with which man can widely synthesize all manner of diverse objects and events into a structure of meaning by which he can orient himself in his attempts to understand himself. This is to say that man understands himself in context, and thus comes to terms with himself, in his self-determination, indirectly through a dialectical process of interaction-reflection with his environment. Thus, man's capacity for self-transcendence is directly serviceable to his self-determination, upon which both his survival and fulfillment depend. And though man in his self-transcendence comes to terms with himself through his interaction with the environment in which he must find his survival and fulfillment, man's hope, which impels him through this arduous procedure, must have for him a force and appeal whose validity is not conditioned by variations in his immediate environment, while being profoundly recognizable in that environment. Man is not satisfied until he had found an inner substance in his existence which empowers his being in the present and also promises fulfillment in the realizable future, a fulfillment which will be timelessly secure.

What first prompts man to take hope in himself and

his world is his natural intuition that all things are evolving out of forms of power which may be harnessed to serve him. In addition, man analogously to nature, seems to be evolving, too, but by what principle, and how analogous that principle is to natural phenomena, man can never be sure. But, in any event man is certain of power to master himself to the point of some amount of self-determination and control over his environment. This certainty is the preliminary basis for hope.

Alfred North Whitehead has implied that the principles according to which human nature matures and realizes its potential are analogous to the more verifiable processes of growth and maturation in nature, with man's capacity for self-transcendence being merely a more advanced form of effects serving the same purpose in lower forms of life. This is to say that for Whitehead there is nothing about man that is unique in nature; that all existing things, animate and inanimate, are on an evolving continuum called Process¹; and that man could, if he so desired, gain a complete understanding of himself in terms of his reflection in this all-inclusive Process.

In this notion of Process, Whitehead has given out a powerful tool for dealing with man's existence as not

¹Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), p. 33.

being a momentary or uniquely mysterious phenomenon, as most existentialists have asserted, but as being a part of the sweeping creative surge of all nature. But in rooting man in a continuum with all existing things, Whitehead ignores man's search for transcendent hope, which could not conceivably be anticipated by lower levels of existence, or realized as immediate "satisfactions".² Whitehead's Process depicts matter, life, and finally man as coming into existence all according to the same chains of expansions, consolidations, and subdivisions, but offers no private, existential hope for individual man apart from Platonic paths to fulfillment which derive their meaning from the Process itself, and which are thus immediately at hand to man's selective self-determination.³ Whitehead knows nothing of possibilities which are not on the threshold of fulfillment in their relativity and immediacy. This dissertation will appropriate the Whiteheadian term Process, making it subject to possibilities of absolute hope for man. Such a modified notion of Process will afford a means of understanding man's existence as evolving on a continuum with all nature, and also having special possibilities for man in his search for a transcendent hope and fulfillment. We anticipate taking White-

² Eg., Ibid., p. 129f

³ Ibid., pp. 34, 128, 133, 248.

head's thought as we find it, supplementing rather than modifying it.

By the notion of Process we refer to the ongoingness of life in its physical manifestations, very much as Whitehead does. If, however, out of our awareness of our own existence we raise the question of destiny, i.e., a time perspective on ourselves and our fulfillment; if out of our awareness of others and our interaction with them, we seek some image of what life amounts to and where it is going; we are questioning what I refer to as the Process. The very notion of Process seems to raise the question of man's future. In the notion of Process we gain a sense of man as an evolving self-awareness, an evolving identity.

Process points to the observation that all things are in flux, passing into existence and passing out. Process can be thought of to mean the existence of all things taken together and seen in their development over a span of time. Process is, therefore, the natural backdrop of man's life, as well as the breeding-ground of man's life. The Process becomes for man the scene of human life in all of its variations and combinations. It is all possible destinies seen on one continuum. In addition to being the development in which natural life arises, flourishes, and dies, Process is for man the surge of being out of which his life emerges and the objective focal point for man's self-determination, the mirror in which

man sees himself darkly. As the realm where man's creatureliness comes to the fore and becomes linked with lower forms of creatureliness, the Process is the repository of man's aspirations, whether those aspirations aim above the Process or through the Process.

The Process is a problem for man for in it each is confronted with the continuity of his life with all other lives of men. This apparent denial of man's individual worth is reversed by the Word, as it is set forth in the Judeo-Christian tradition, which reveals this continuity to be the occasion and possibility of human fulfillment rather than the denial of it. This reversal is set forth in this dissertation as a primary affirmation, the implications of which it will be the purpose of this dissertation to explore.

The notion of Process, as we get it from Whitehead, is from the standpoint of Barthian orthodoxy a secular notion, notwithstanding Whitehead's doctrine of God which accompanies it. It is secular because it builds upon the physical elements of existence.⁴ As such its value to a Barthian point of view is in its accuracy as an image of the modern secular Weltanschauung, which synthesizes experience the way the Process system does, a way which can be viewed as correct only for lack of an equally

⁴ Ibid., p. 6.

viable alternative. Thus, the notion of Process may be thought of as a weaving together of secular images of life particularly as they revolve about the dominant intuitions of modern science. From the standpoint of Barthian orthodoxy, the Process might be thought of as demonstrable Creation. However, we will utilize Whitehead's Process as he gives it to us, and to signify that we will, we will hold to his nomenclature for it.

Whitehead did not seem to experience the impact of evil and hopelessness with which the recent decades of strife-torn Germany confronted the Continental philosophers and theologians. His optimism, a word used by Reinhold Niebuhr to describe his system⁵, knows nothing of the existential abyss which is brought out in the writings of Heidegger, Camus, Sartre, Bultmann, and of course Barth, himself, particularly in his Epistle to the Romans. For these existential writers the last thread of immanent meaning has been broken with the seeming break-up of the continuity of history, and there simply is no rational basis for envisioning any hope that could evolve out of modern man's existence as we find it.

Whitehead insists that there is continuity in modern man's existence, though that continuity, and along

⁵Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941), I, 112f.

with it his philosophy, is open-ended toward contingent possibilities and decisive changes. Here, be it noted, Whitehead opens up his system to possibilities which, though unpredictable from his system, are predominately optimistic, i.e., anticipated along positive, creative lines, rather than along lines leading to results destructive for the Process as a whole. Whitehead does not see any possibilities in the Process that will finally destroy the Process. There simply is no primordial basis for such a development in his system. Anything approximating what could be called evil in Whitehead's system is, when it arises, simply sloughed off as abortive failure, and the Process continues on its experimental way with the inevitability of break-through and fruition at hand.⁶

From Whitehead's point of view the existentialists of despair were the victims of a Weltanschauung which was marked for failure by its very presuppositions. Thus, for Whitehead evil is, at most, a temporary impidence of the Process, never a final dead end as it is for the existentialists of despair.⁷ It is to Whitehead's advantage that his notion of Process is not premised on any continuity of history. Thus, Whitehead is automatically exempted from the existentialists' attacks on history-

⁶Whitehead, op. cit., p. 517.

⁷Ibid...

based anthropologies.

Doubtless the existentialists of despair, in turn, would have a hard time seeing any resemblance between Whitehead's Process and life as they have experienced it. There is something about the tragedies of the twentieth century which when experienced personally, make such a system as Whitehead's Process seem inconsequential even if believed in. Whitehead gives man no attributes or possibilities which do not have precursors on the lower levels of evolution; man is in a sense profoundly dehumanized. One cannot find the depths and heights of the human soul in Whitehead's Process. Whitehead certainly has avoided the sublimities, as well as the pitfalls, of the German Enlightenment. His natural-evolutionary system of thought is in no danger of collapsing alongside of the Kantian and Hegelian systems.

This contrast between Whitehead and the Continental existentialists is not made with the intention of disposing of either side, but rather for the purpose of gaining some perspective on Whitehead's relevance to the problem of man's hope vis-a-vis the philosophical-theological situation in which Barth has done his work. We do not want to discard Whitehead with any claim such as that he is naive or absurd in the face of Continental nihilism. Instead, we hold to Whitehead as a definitive expositor of the modern scientific Weltanschauung. We appreciate his grasp

of the modern naturalistic approach to the world, which, conditioned as it is by scientific claims, cannot significantly be contrasted with the notion of Process which Whitehead gives us. Even the resurgence of post-World War II Germany has belied to a great extent the existentialists of despair, and would tend to confirm the Nazi regime as having been a mere experimental failure in accordance with a Whiteheadian understanding of evil. We would add that all modern men, however cloistered, however "worldly", must grasp the world in terms of an image very much like that of Process, so pervasive and experientially verifiable is the scientific cosmology. Whitehead has merely summed up for us, with considerable flare and uncanny intuition, the kind of world image which science has been leading up to for centuries. As far as scientific break-through goes, the world does seem in fact to be the way science says it is. And Whitehead's thought seems to be true in the same way that scientific investigation is true. We wish to take our cue from Whitehead to that extent, while not being hampered by technical delineations within his system that may be of interest to the Whiteheadian interpreters: only the outline will be appropriated, not the detailed shading. For Whitehead's work, as implied by Whitehead, himself, serves more to draw attention to the Process than to say a final word

word about it.⁸ It is the intuitive awareness demonstrated in Whitehead's notion of Process which this dissertation will utilize, and in that utilization we will attempt to speak from Whitehead, not for him.

If both a generalized notion of Whiteheadian Process and Barthian orthodoxy are true in their dominant spheres, what kind of union can there be between them? This is the question to which this dissertation will address itself. The answer has been called a soteriology because it will also be an answer to the question, how can man be saved? The latter question points to the real purpose of this dissertation, the thought of Whitehead and Barth being instrumental to that end.

We will now outline the methodological presuppositions of this dissertation. Every statement of Christian theology has hanging over it an epistemological problem that threatens to demolish it. As soon as the Christian theologian makes an assertion which he does not base solely on his own confession of faith⁹, he becomes vulnerable to the legalistic scepticism of modern positivism. The Christian theologian has no standing ground but his faith¹⁰, and his faith is all that he is

⁸Ibid., p. 21.

⁹Cf. Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics (Edinburgh: Clark, 1936-1958), I/2, 5f.

¹⁰Cf. Ibid., I/2, 792.

attempting to understand. But with his faith the theologian is on his own ground. Faith has its prerogatives, even though some may object to the airs of omniscience which seem at times to blow from it. Along this line Barth states: "...we can end in certainty of faith only if we have already started in certainty of faith."¹¹ By the same token, in the theologian faith must have sufficient courage to speak. Christian theology is possible because the Word pushes toward expression.¹² God seeks to make Himself known to men in a saving way.¹³

Part of our attempts to understand God must be a theistically-derived doctrine of man that outlines what man ought to and can know about God. We must be willing to live with limited knowledge if what knowledge we can have is to really count.¹⁴ It is the conviction of this writer that we must approach God soteriologically. We first come to know God in the way in which He answers our need. God has made available the Word as the soteriological means by which men can know Him when they acknowledge their hopelessness apart from Him. We cannot know everything about God. If men could know

¹¹Ibid., I/2, 206.

¹²Cf. Ibid., I/2, 232f.

¹³Cf. Ibid., I/1, 282; I/2, 389.

¹⁴Cf. Ibid., I/1, 201.

everything about God, they would be like God, and not need to be justified by God. God provides in His Word everything about Himself which man needs to know to be saved. And the Word has the special function of reaching man in the Process: man is part of the Process, lives in the Process, and can never escape or completely transcend the Process, even in his search for God. Man is a prisoner of the Process, and if God is to reach him, it must be in the Process that God reaches him. This necessity, which God Himself seems to have imposed on man and on Himself in His relationship to man, is clearly marked by the Biblical doctrines of Creation and Incarnation, of which more will be said later. On the other hand, if the Word is specially slated for man in the Process, it must also be acknowledged that the Word is absolute; otherwise its soteriological power would only be relative. Here we look to the once-for-allness of the historical Jesus for confirmation of the absoluteness of the Word. We acknowledge in accordance with Whitehead, on the other hand, that the Process is relative.¹⁵ Everything that is here will someday be gone or completely replaced by something else, and man himself "flourishes like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows

¹⁵Whitehead, op. cit., pp. 95, 113.

knows it no more."¹⁶

A theology that is soteriologically relevant to man must focus dialectically, oscillating to and fro, between man (seen via the Process) and God (as apprehended via the Word). We must add that it is the Word which enables us to see in terms of the Process man's true need for salvation. Whenever theology starts with and concentrates solely on man, it is no longer speaking from the Word because the Word does not focus on man as its first affirmation, and rather places man in the context of divinely-wrought possibilities toward which man on his own can only speculate without certainty. On the other hand, whenever theology starts with and concentrates solely on God's intentions and methods in order to elucidate the Word, it loses the Word's relevance to man and with it the Word's central soteriological significance. The Word can be found by theology only where it is functioning, i.e., in the midst of men, as may be verified by the whole of Biblical christology. Thus, Christian theology begins with the burden of man's situation and need, and God's intentions and methods, simultaneously.

At first glance it would seem that Barth succeeds in isolating the Word from man and setting forth in his

¹⁶Psalms 103:15, 16.

Church Dogmatics an exposition of the Word apart from man. But it will be noticed that in his doctrine of the Word, which he sets forth at the beginning of Church Dogmatics, prior to setting down a doctrine of man, Barth depends heavily on the Trinitarian dogmatics of the early church.¹⁷ But in depending on the early church's Trinitarian dogmatics, Barth also tacitly depends on the faith of the early church, and therefore on the entire situation of man in the early church. Trinitarian dogmatics was motivated by human need in conjunction with the inspiration of the Word, and this same motivation gives to Barth's doctrine of the Word its implicit importance and point of departure.

Reinhold Niebuhr has given unforgettable testimony to the principle that to deal adequately with the epistemological problem of faith, theology must begin with a doctrine of man and what man can know, as well as what man needs.¹⁸ And it is clear from Niebuhr's work that such a doctrine of man, as a point of departure, can only be a rational preliminary to a dogmatic doctrine of the Word, taking in all of the past vistas of the church, and which alone can illuminate man beyond the bounds of rational analysis.

¹⁷Barth, op. cit., I/1.

¹⁸Niebuhr, op. cit.

The primary affirmation of the dissertation is that the relationship between Word and Process consists in the Word's illuminating the Process to man permitting man to see his way to fulfillment within the Process. This affirmation, which is a faith affirmation and cannot be defended against unfriendly scepticism, enables us to talk about the Word in terms of concrete implications, implications especially for man's justification and fulfillment. The affirmation takes its point of departure both from the Word and the Process. The common, usual dialectic of man's life begins with the Process and the man's relationship with the Process. But, any dialectic of faith, including the one carried out in this dissertation, invariably begins with the Word and what the Process now means in the light of it, as well and moves to man's new relationship to the Process with its new meaning.

It may now be seen that the procedural difficulties of this dissertation stem, to a large extent, from the fact that man can be known both rationally and from the Word; likewise, man can know himself both rationally and from the Word. These two sources of knowledge usually confirm each other, but the Word probes man to greater depth than man could probe himself rationally because the Word is God's probing of man. Barth would not agree that the two understandings of man are at all mutually

confirming, however. Thomas W. Ogletree gives us the benefit of his perspective on Barth's theological methods by contrasting Barth's approach to man, from a christological starting point, against methods of theology, such as E. Troeltsch's, whereby man is taken as the starting point:

Anytime theology moves from some general insight or understanding about man and the world, anytime it begins with man's consciousness and his possibilities for being and knowing, it never really gets away from anthropology in some of its forms or modifications. Everything becomes anthropology...

For a theology which begins with God's revelation of himself in Jesus Christ, quite the opposite situation holds. Here anthropology forms only "one chapter among others". It can no longer be the basic discipline which "imposes its criterion on all other knowledge and perhaps claims to embrace it".¹⁹ On the contrary, christology becomes the comprehensive theme. It embraces and regulates and determines all other knowledge.²⁰

On the other hand, while the Word's illuminations of man must be taken as definitive, we cannot ignore man's search for, and shadowy knowledge of, himself apart from the Word if for no other reason than to gain insight into what Barth would refer to as man's rebellious self-sufficiency over against God. Furthermore, if man's self-knowledge in the Word is to be relevant and effective for his life

¹⁹Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, (Edinburgh: Clark: 1936-1958), III/2, 21.

²⁰Thomas W. Ogletree, Christian Faith and History, (New York: Abbingdon Press, 1965), pp. 131, 132.

in the Process, it cannot be completely contrary to what he knows naturally from the Process about himself. And if it is true that theology must begin with what the Word affirms about man, it is also true that sooner or later theology must deal with man as he is found in the Process, the Process being where the Word finds him, as a corrective to dogmatics that may be erroneous or irrelevant.

The theologian must remember in any event that the Word is never for theology's sake but for man's sake, and as such is always and only soteriological, never merely scholastic, in intent. In this connection, the Word may be thoroughly disruptive of all rational assumptions in theology. The contortions of Barth's thought seem to be a perpetual reminder of this fact. When the Word illuminates man in the Process, it reveals man to be in need of salvation. And with man seen in that light, the Word in turn answers man's need. Clearly, here the Word departs from any conclusions about man that could be derived from rational premises and inferences concerning the Process alone. This dissertation is in full agreement with Barth's teachings at this point.

Where we have arrived is at the notion that if the epistemology of faith forces us to start with man and what man can know, that starting point itself is burdened by soteriological ambiguities introduced by the Word, understood in the Barthian sense, and we are moved full

circle back to the Word again. What this means is that we cannot discuss the dialectical relationship between Word and Process without constant reference to man who stands at the intersection of both, who participates in both, and in whose thought the Word-Process dialectic takes place. Thus every affirmation involving the Word must contain, at least implicitly, the following: (1) the basic truth content which faith apprehends in the Word, (2) man's epistemological relationship with that content, i.e., how it affirms itself to man and how man can know for himself that it is true, and (3) man's soteriological relationship with that content, i.e., the contents' relevance for the problem of man's hope and salvation, and how that for which the content stands does in fact save man. This dissertation will attempt to show how the Process, as illuminated by the Word, becomes the medium through which the Word meets all three of these criteria for faith affirmation. The purpose of this attempt is to show how the Word and the Process are soteriologically related to man. The procedure of this dissertation will be in accordance with a self-evident axiom of logic that a dialectical procedure cannot validly arrive at any conclusions or affirmations which were not intrinsic to its starting point, which is to say that any dialectical procedure is really for the purpose of clarifying the relationships between a few basic givens.

Barth's conflict with 19th Century liberalism may be interpreted as a conflict with an idolizing of the Process. Process is never more than relative. The Word makes this known. But, it is also apparent by the immediacy of the illuminations of the Process by the Word. If the Process were absolute, the Word would enter it as one continuous, unchanging illumination. Instead the Word, which is absolute, issuing from an absolute One beyond the Process, can occur only as an immediate event within the Process due to the relativity of the Process. And just as the Process is never finalized, the Word's illuminations of it cannot ever be final illuminations, only immediate, concrete illuminations subject to being superseded by future ones. That is why in the Biblical accounts when the Word enters time with a proclamation of God's wholly-other judgment on all flesh, it does so only with eschatological images, images which are concrete as all communicable images must be within time, but images that look ahead to the final end of all things within time in the face of the one and only absolute judgment of God. But even eschatologically, and perhaps the moreso, the Word constantly occurs anew, with new relevance.

On the other hand, only the Word can give the authentic, real illumination of the Process, i.e., the revelation of the Process as it really is for man.

Therein lies a facet of its transcendent authority for man in the Barthian sense. Apart from the Word, man finalizes the Process in an effort to secure his own place and involvements in it, since man is intuitively aware that nothing exists apart from the Process. The decisive difference the Word makes in man's life is to measure man according to his true place in the Process, the place which man cannot find apart from the Word. The Word illuminates the relativity of the Process and therefore illuminates the relativity of man: therein lies its scandal.

Whitehead views the Process in the relativity in which all scientific observation views it.²¹ But Whitehead's system does not focus on man's relativity with sufficient clarity to make the system, itself, a scandal to man. The implicit scandal of Whitehead's Process escapes even the closest unwary reading of Whitehead's writings because the generalizations in which those writings are couched avoid specific reference to man.

The Word makes known not only the relativity of the Process but also the futility of failure to participate in that relativity. Not to recognize, and be reconciled to, the relativity of the Process and one's place in it is to be so misled about the Process as not

²¹Whitehead, op. cit., pp. 6, 15.

to be participating in the process at all--that is, not to be existing at all, and not to be a part of the becoming which occurs only in the Process. Such is the error made by all neo-Platonic notions of man and Grace. It is remarkable that man through neo-Platonic thought is able to intuit from bare philosophical objectifications ideal states and perfections which are grasped as the summum bonum of Grace when it is conferred upon man. Thus, neo-Platonism interprets the gift of Grace as an absolutizing of the one receiving it via spiritual states supposedly unamenable to the vicissitudes of the Process. However, Jesus in the Synoptics avoids all images of the Kingdom of God that might lift up such static, absolutized spiritual states of perfection as the summum bonum of the Kingdom, qualities which are not attainable within the Process, not even with the help of Grace because they are not qualities conferred with Grace.²² Neither does Jesus lift up a specific mode of life or behavior, or any sort of stereotypable sign of God's good favor. Jesus notably speaks to the hearts of men²³ in matters of the Kingdom, and sets forth the Kingdom as a matter of men's hidden attitudes and finite responsive-

²²Cf. Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, (Edinburgh: Clark, 1936-1958), IV/2, 316f, 377.

²³Luke 6:45; Matthew 5:8; 15:19; 22:37; Cf. Mark 4:22

ness which will gradually be manifested. Man's freedom and necessity for decision remain intact: man remains relative even in Grace, and only the Grace itself is absolute.²⁴ The outward goodness wrought by Grace in a man is made up of momentary actions which inherently have no final importance in themselves but serve as signs of that which is finally important. Indeed, as the parable of the Last Judgment²⁵ shows, the man who finally receives Christ's approval may know little or nothing of the ultimate value of his service while he is performing it. For this reason real service to Christ and in Christ can only be done in faith in Christ. The decisive thing of faith is the acknowledgement of the fatherhood of God and the lordship of Jesus Christ; and one cannot do this if one has absolutized himself into the center of things by means of an imaginary, erroneous understanding of Grace. To acknowledge one's relativity, to acknowledge the relativity of all of the artifacts of one's life, is to see oneself as not being at the center of one's existence, and to see Jesus Christ at the center of one's existence and the existence of all men and all that is created. In the Synoptics those who had absolutized themselves received nothing from Jesus but harsh rebukes, and even Jesus is ambiguous regarding the question of His

²⁴Cf. II Corinthians 4:7.

²⁵Matthew 25:31.

Messiahship. Jesus exhorts those who would enter the Kingdom to become like little children. And even in the Fourth Gospel, references to an ideal perfection and status are restricted to Jesus' heavenly identity and are not even conferred upon the disciples with the conferring of the Holy Spirit, with the possible exception of infallibility in dealing with sin.²⁶ From these general trends in the New Testament we must locate the meaning of Christian existence in Christian service which is consistently set forth in the teachings of Jesus as relative and hence corresponding to the relativity of the Process.

Modern man is not so prone to absolutize himself above the Process as he is inclined to absolutize himself in terms of the Process. He absolutizes the Process by way of scientific explanations of the causal relationships of the Process. Science itself readily admits the relativity of its findings so as to maintain the factual integrity of these findings for further investigation. But modern man, particularly western man, in his self-determination confronts the indubitabilities of science and assumes that here is a solid rock from which to get his existential bearings. But science has no basis for probing the Process for the existential meaning sought by man. Only the Word, which in Gen. 1 served as the

²⁶John 20:22.

primordial initiation of the Process, can fully unveil the undercurrents of the Process and sum them up in their final meaning for man. Only the Word can make known the basic sources of being in the Process on which are based the phenomena of energy and power that are analyzable by science. In this connection, Barth writes,

The (demonstrable) laws known to us are well-grounded hypotheses on the basis of which we can go forward prepared in some measure for further experience and thought equipped for further reliable knowledge, with the certain expectation that all further events which confront us will at any rate take place within this or that order or form. Concerning the actuality of the laws known to us we will already think rather more modestly because we will be aware that they cannot in any case originate or effect the event itself...²⁷

And regardless of the faith placed in it, science cannot break through to affirm the individual worth of man's personhood; and without a genuine affirmation of personhood, faith is empty. The subtlety of the error of the modern misplaced faith in science, however is not in the belief that science can confer upon man personal worth--which obviously it cannot--but rather is to be found in the assumption that man can use the indubitable knowledge of science to build up on his own a basis of personal worth for his life. The more dismal his failures at this, the more fanatical become his repeat-

²⁷Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, (Edinburgh: Clark, 1936-1958), III/3, 127.

ed attempts, as witness the hysteria of the Nazi regime. Thus when science is sought as the basis for human life, it destroys human life.

Science is able to reveal enough of the Process to know that there is a Process. Indeed man in general, the man on the street, is able freely to intuit the Process from the causalities which science has delineated in nature. Thus science may be thought of as natural man's disciplined observations of the Process, and when thought of in this way provides the valuable service to theology of demonstrating what man's natural, given faculties are able to grasp vis-a-vis the givenness of the causalities of the Process. But science cannot say a definitive word about man because it can view man only factually and not see him existentially in the wider context of the Process as a whole; and therefore science cannot intuit the ultimate meaning of man's life. What is truly remarkable about the modern scientific-pragmatic tenor of mind is the capacity it manifests in man to synthesize facts into experiences and to derive from these experiences a semblance of personal meaning on a naturalistic level. Such a capacity could never have been imagined from any of the theologies prior to modern times. Modern scientific living has brought out a rugged adaptability and individualism in man for which history seems devoid of precedent, though it is not easy to distinguish in modern man solid-

ly integrated individualism from the sham individualism of social pretense.

In summary, the idealizing and idolizing of Grace above the Process is the perennial neo-Platonic error which knows nothing of man's need of Grace in his relativity, or man's continuing relativity in Grace. On the other side, the idolizing and absolutizing of the Process by science creates the anthropocentric optimism of an Aristotelian naturalism, to which elements in Whiteheadian thought are comparable. In fairness to the Whiteheadians, however, we should note that Whitehead never absolutized the Process into a scheme of salvation for man, not being much aware of man's need for salvation. But optimistic humanism is in Whitehead's thought, nonetheless, to the extent that Whitehead enclosed man within the Process, albeit in a state of freedom made up of alternatives which supposedly have their antecedents in sub-human life. Between neo-Platonic and Aristotelian estimations of reality stands the Process, roughly as Whitehead gives it to us, irrefutable in its givenness, containing the sum of the options for man's life, but unable to save man because of its relativity and impersonalness. Over against the Process stands the Word, absolute and immediate, but never final. To a rapprochement between Word and Process we now turn.

CHAPTER II

WORD AND PROCESS

The suddenness of the Word does not negate the continuity of the Process, but like a flare illuminates the geography of the Process. Vis-a-vis man's intelligence the Word illuminates the over-all meanings and goals of man's life, whereas the Process, apart from the Word, presents to man methods on a causal level, of realization of aims within existence. Thus, man's response to the Word is self-committed faith, whereas man's response to the Process, perceived rationally apart from the Word, is rational assent.

Man perceives rationally the Process according to images of natural growth, and assumes the Process to be analogous to observable natural growth. Man thus naturally couches the meaning of his life, his self-understanding, according to such growth-images of the Process. However, the Word illuminates the Process so as to show that in the eternal significance of the Process, the meaning of the Process transcends all such growth images of it, while not denying the observable growth patterns on the surface of it. The Word illuminates to faith the Process in such a way as to reveal that aspects of the Process rationally discernable in Nature derive from a center beyond Nature their true status as element in God's

Creation, and as such are continually sustained by God through the Word. All of the Process is growth, since nothing comes into existence suddenly; what is known only to faith is that the Process is sustained and validated only by the Word. At the same time, the Process, which is everywhere visible to man's rational intuition, and of which man himself is an obvious product, is the same Process which the Word illuminates to faith.

The Process has its ultimate importance in that it is that which the Word sustains and illuminates to faith.²⁸ In addition, the Process has ultimate importance in that while the Word cannot be received by man apart from man's faith in God, the Word cannot take effect in any tangible way except through the Process. The Process is all there is, while the Word, in its eternal power and authority from God, is the sole sustaining power of the Process and illumination of it to man's faith. The Word reveals the sole meaning of the Process. The Process is movement from transcendence to immanence, cutting through time and unveiling to faith the true nature of time.

In the absence of the Word's illumination, the Process appears to man to be abysmally trivial, especial-

²⁸Cf. Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, (Edinburgh: Clark, 1936-1958), III/3, 52.

ly when man is somewhat oriented to the Word through faith. That is why we cannot rationally construct a system whereby the Process is made to appear existentially significant for man. Man does construct such systems, but all such systems are false to the extent that they give man existential significance by denying the relativity of the Process. Man's true existential significance is disclosed only in the immediacy of his encounter with the Word. Therefore, when this dissertation states that the Word illuminates to man the Process, we cannot state in dogmatic terms specifically what that illumination reveals about the Process. This is comparable to the following from Barth: "The Word of God is so powerful that it is not bound by what we discover and value... as its content."²⁹ Moreover, when this dissertation sets out to clarify the relationship between Word and Process, the absoluteness of the Word and the relativity of the Process must consign any such clarification to a paradoxical, dialectical conclusion.

In Jesus Christ, the Word is seen in its full, personal, saving significance.³⁰ In order for man to

²⁹Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics (Edinburgh: Clark, 1936-1958), I/1, 531.

³⁰Cf. Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics (Edinburgh, Clark, 1936-1958), I/1, 155ff; IV/2, 327, 331f.

have faith, he must know that his existence is authenticated in the present and must be able to see objectively in history the significance of this authentication. Thus, Barth speaks of God's revelation in history as a "Once-for-all" reality "as God is once-for-all."³¹ The Resurrected Christ of faith fulfills the former necessity, while the historical Jesus fulfills the latter. Thus, faith finds all of its epistemological necessities and conditions fulfilled in Jesus Christ, who meets these conditions by way of a personal validation of man's existence. And since Jesus Christ was given for men, it is possible to understand Him soteriologically, starting and working back from man's need. This is a basic methodological tenant of this dissertation. Jesus, himself, paved the way for this procedure when he shifted the emphasis from Himself to man in Luke 11:27, 28. While the Word sustains the Process and illuminates the Process to man, we cannot understand the Word in our personal existence apart from Jesus Christ, who as a man is the Word. Apart from Jesus Christ the affirmation, set forth in Gen. 1, that the Process came forth from the Word, and the affirmation, set forth in John 1:9; that the Word illuminates to man the Process, are devoid of any content graspable by faith. Apart from Jesus

³¹Ibid., I/2, 12.

Christ statements about the Word can have only the value of philosophical necessities, such as that of showing how a transcendent God can relate to, without being bound by, immanent man. But, in Jesus Christ the Word lives for man existentially, as a ruling power,³² because for faith Jesus Christ Himself lives both objectively and subjectively--³³ objectively in history through Scripture³⁴ and subjectively in one's own being through the Spirit of His Resurrection. Thus, Barth writes,

It is not the case that our creaturely thought and language, in relation to the creaturely reason that produces...a creaturely logos, should in itself have a command of allegory to justify us in a claim to think and speak the truth, when we call Jesus Christ the Word of God. But it requires revelation and faith, it requires the continuous gracious event of the incarnation of the eternal Word and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, ever and again to arouse and lift up what we know as the Word to such a command of allegory, that it may become the truth when we call Jesus Christ the Word of God.³⁵

Since this dissertation is completely and directly dependent on the Barthian doctrine of the Word, it will be advantageous at this point to survey Barth's understanding of what the Word is. There Barth begins his exposition

³²Ibid., I/2, 792f.

³³Ibid., I/2, 693.

³⁴E.g., ibid., I/2, 693.

³⁵Ibid., I/2, 500.

of the nature of the Word with the following remark:

We can never by retrospect, and so by anticipation fix what God is or what His Word is: He must always repeat that to us and always repeat it afresh.³⁶

When the Word is spoken to man there takes place a "meeting" between God and man in which knowledge of God is imparted to man; thus any doctrine of the Word points immediately to a doctrine of God's threefold nature:

In God's utterance there comes to be a meeting and a communion between His nature and man, but not an absorption of this nature into man's awareness. There can only be a constant repetition of fresh divine utterance. In this divine utterance there is realized, as such, together with the 'God with us', the knowledge of God and His Word of God--say who God is; He is the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.³⁷

Now, the limitations of the church, and the men in it, are such that the Word of God can reach men only through certain established channels, viz., proclamation, Scripture, and revelation. And apart from pointing to the doctrine of the threefold nature of God, any statement as to what the Word of God is can only point to these channels:

And so we can only--i.e., in view of the reality of the Church, within whose bounds we do our thinking--say what the Word of God is, here recalled and here expected: as the Word of God, it is proclamation, Scripture, and revelation.³⁸

³⁶Ibid., I/1, 149.

³⁷Ibid., Cf. also I/1, 381.

³⁸Ibid., I/1, 149.

Therefore, what the Word is, dogmatically speaking, can be only the forms which the Word takes:

...we can, indeed, say what the Word of God is; but we must say it indirectly. We must recall the forms in which it is real for us and from these three forms which it takes infer how it is. That 'how' is the reflected image, attainable by man, of the unattainable nature of God.³⁹

Likewise, "...there is no concept of the Word of God except the name of God."⁴⁰ And the phrase "God's Word" can only mean "God speaks";

...in the form in which the Church knows God's Word... 'God's Word' means 'God speaks', and all further statements about it must be regarded as exegesis, not as limitation or negation of this proposition.⁴¹

That "God's Word" means "God speaks" signifies the Word's spirituality⁴², personal character⁴³, purposiveness⁴⁴. Under this heading of "purposiveness" Barth notes (a) that we could never speak the Word to ourselves⁴⁵; (b) that the Word "aims at and touches us in our existence"⁴⁶; (c) that the Word renews our "original relationship" with God⁴⁷; and (d) that in the Word "God announces Himself to man, i.e., by which he promises

³⁹Ibid., I/1, 149, 150.

⁴⁰Ibid., I/1, 181.

⁴¹Ibid., I/1, 150.

⁴²Ibid., I/1, 151.

⁴³Ibid., I/1, 155.

⁴⁴Ibid., I/1, 158.

⁴⁵Ibid., I/1, 160.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid., I/1, 161.

Himself as the content of man's future, as He who meets him on his way through time as the End of all time, as the hidden Lord of all times.⁴⁸

God's Word is God's act⁴⁹, signifying the Word's "contingent contemporaneousness"⁵⁰, "power to rule"⁵¹, character as "decision"⁵². As "decision" the Word (a) is not the same as that which is usually experienced in life⁵³; signifies a "choice"⁵⁴; "becomes operative on and in a decision of the man to whom it is spoken"⁵⁵.

The Word is marked as God's mystery by its worldliness⁵⁶: "To get round the worldliness of His Word would be to get round Christ"⁵⁷. The Word is marked as God's mystery in its onesidedness, binding us to God⁵⁸, and revealing to us our limitation⁵⁹. "The Word of God in its veiling--its form--is God's demand upon men. The Word of God in its unveiling--its content--is God's turning to man"⁶⁰. The Word of God is marked as God's mystery in its spirituality⁶¹: "...the Word of God is

⁴⁸Ibid., I/1, 161, 162.

⁴⁹Ibid., I/1, 163.

⁵⁰Ibid., I/1, 164.

⁵¹Ibid., I/1, 170.

⁵²Ibid., I/1, 178.

⁵³Ibid., I/1, 179.

⁵⁴Ibid., I/1, 181.

⁵⁵Ibid., I/1, 182.

⁵⁶Ibid., I/1, 188.

⁵⁷Ibid., I/1, 192.

⁵⁸Ibid., I/1, 198, 199.

⁵⁹Ibid., I/1, 201.

⁶⁰Ibid., I/1, 204.

⁶¹Ibid., I/1, 207.

a mystery in that it really touches us spiritually, i.e., invariably only through the Holy Spirit"⁶².

Church proclamation signifies that the Word can be and is heard by men.⁶³ However,

God's Word ceases to be grace or grace itself ceases to be grace when we ascribe to man a disposition toward this Word, a possibility of knowledge independent of it and peculiar in itself, over against this Word.⁶⁴

The dominant characteristic of the Word is that it is self-authenticating:

The fact of the Word of God in no respect nor yet in the very slightest degree receives its worth or validity from a presupposition which we apply to it; its truth for us, like its truth in itself, is based purely on itself.⁶⁵

As such, the knowability of the Word of God for man is strictly within itself:

Men can know the Word of God because and so far as God wills that they should know it....⁶⁶

Inasmuch as,

Man exists not abstractly but concretely, i.e., in experiences, in determination of his experiences by objects, something distinct from himself,⁶⁷

Therefore,

By experience of the Word of God which is possible to men...we understand the determination of their

⁶²Ibid., I/1, 209.

⁶³Ibid., I/1, 214, 215.

⁶⁴Ibid., I/1, 221.

⁶⁵Ibid., I/1, 223; Cf. also I/1, 379.

⁶⁶Ibid., I/1, 223, 224.

⁶⁷Ibid., I/1, 226.

existence as men by the Word of God.

...Experience of the Word of God, of course, takes place always in an act of human self-determination. But it is not as this act that it is experience of the Word of God. No determination which man can give himself is as such determination by the Word of God.⁶⁸

Barth reminds us,

...the Word of God is quite literally language....⁶⁹

The Word that calls us to God is the same Word that sustains us in both guilt and righteousness:

The Word which we hear in revelation, the Word by which we are called to the undeserved and from our standpoint, impossible communion of God with sinners--this Word is none other than that by which we who should hear it, together with the whole reality that is distinct from God, are called into existence, without which we would neither sinners nor righteous, without which we would not be at all.⁷⁰

Thus, the

...Word is the ground of our existence beyond our existence....⁷¹

but also illuminates our existence:

We are...aware of our human existence in no other way, than by the same Word which announces to us judgment and grace.⁷²

Above all, the Word is Jesus Christ, and therein lies the ground of its significance both objectively in history and subjectively in faith.⁷³ Everything that is said

⁶⁸Ibid., I/1, 227.

⁶⁹Ibid., I/1, 231.

⁷⁰Ibid., I/1, 508.

⁷¹Ibid., I/1, 508.

⁷²Ibid., I/1, 509; Cf. also I/2, 237, 388, 793; also I/1, 227, 229, 508.

⁷³E.g., Ibid., III/3, 264.

about the Word must be true with respect to Jesus Christ. This concludes our brief survey of Barth's doctrine of the Word. However, we will be directly dependent throughout this dissertation on this doctrine as well as related insights from the Church Dogmatics.

Word implies an immediacy of one's encounter with God, when taken in the Judeo-Christian sense. Word brings to mind God's acting now. In addition, Word signifies that the Word, being an immediate disclosure of God is never a final disclosure.⁷⁴ Word signifies that God can command us from a distance: with the Word He can establish our existence without revealing the mystery of His being. Cf. Barth:

...the man who is apprehended and freed by the Word of God is not without light and therefore always sees light in the obscurity of world occurrence.

It is to be noted... that this is not the light in which all things are open to God. It is not the revelation and contemplation of the mystery, the history. But it is light, and as much light as God thinks necessary and salutary for the believer in his time and place, and will therefore give him.⁷⁵

In this connection Barth reminds us that the Word's illumination of man's existence is God's way of making Himself known to man, and the former function must be thought of as being subordinate to the latter:

⁷⁴Cf. ibid., I/1, 149, 375.

⁷⁵Ibid., III/3, 24.

The Word of God continually places the history of creaturely being in its light in order that God Himself, who speaks to man, may be better known by him.⁷⁶

While the Word is self-authenticating, based on God's authority, it is upon entering the Process specifically for man, for man's benefit, that it must be received by man as such, and as such manifests the redemptive intent of God toward man.⁷⁷ This intent is indispensably confirmed by Jesus Christ, when as the Word's objective reference in history, He is received subjectively by faith. The redemptive intent of God in the Word cannot be verified apart from Jesus Christ because of the inherently historical conditionedness of the Word's immediacy: the ultimacy of the Word's savingness must be confirmed by the once-for-allness of the historical Jesus and the self-authentication of the Holy Spirit to faith in the present.⁷⁸ If we ask, what does the Word do for man? in view of all that Barth has said to this point, and in view of the savingness of the Word seen by faith in Jesus Christ, the answer must be that the Word (1) illuminates man, and (2) justifies man. The former function without the latter becomes a judgmental backward

⁷⁶Ibid., III/3, 26.

⁷⁷cf. Ibid., I/1, 230, 379, 381; I/2, 792f; and III/3, 148.

⁷⁸cf. Ibid., I/2, 12, 198, 801f.

look in man's life, but with the latter becomes a redemptive forward look in a man's life. Both functions of the Word are described by Barth as follows:

Our own existence is revealed to us not as a divine but as a very human existence. Yet it is also revealed as an existence which God in His graciousness had adopted and assumed as such, as the existence of the children of God....

...It is true that God is with us in Christ and that we are His children, even if we ourselves do not perceive it. It is true from all eternity, for Jesus Christ who assumed our nature is the eternal Son of God. And it is always true in time, even before we perceive it to be true. It is still true even if we never perceive it to be true, except that in this case it is true to our eternal destruction.⁷⁹

Nevertheless,

...he becomes clear to himself in the individual decision in which his self-identification with the divine Word takes place. We cannot say that he only comes to exist in this event, but we must say that in this event alone he becomes clear to himself.⁸⁰

We will now look at the Word and the Process together. We began this chapter with some preliminary observations of both derived from Barth's doctrine of the Word. The immediacy of the Word set against the continuity of the Process resulted in the preliminary conclusion that for man the Word must be related to the Process through the Word's illumination of the Process. The ultimate significances for man of both the Word and the Process, it was concluded, are tied up in this

⁷⁹Cf. ibid., I/2, 237, 238.

⁸⁰Ibid., I/1, 705.

dialectical relationship. The absoluteness of the Word can only be seen as contingency from within the relative continuity of the Process. Now, with our setting forth of the Word Christologically and according to Barthian dogmatics, we are equipped to look further into the dialectical relationship between Word and Process.

Our starting point in the dialectical relationship between Word and Process is the fact that they are experienced by man as being distinct. If they are distinct, is the Word soteriological in a way in which the Process (always taken in the Whiteheadian sense) is not? Objectively and subjectively Jesus Christ is the once-for-all assurance to faith that the Word is soteriological. But, it is not objectively clear from Jesus Christ that the Process is not inherently soteriological like the Word: indeed, the Incarnation tends to affirm the Process (demonstrable Creation) as good for man. Jesus' eschatological utterances tend to limit the soteriological importance of the Process, however. That is the objective clue. On the level of personal faith, on the other hand, when the Word illuminates the Process it does so in such a way that the Process is shown not to be soteriologically efficacious in itself. When one has experienced salvation, where can one trace the source of that salvation but to the Word alone? If salvation came from the Process it would be continuous just as the Process is

continuous, and one would never have felt a need for salvation. Furthermore, one is not awakened to Jesus Christ by the Process, but only by the Word. The Process is good, but it is good because Jesus Christ affirms it to be such. Apart from Jesus Christ we would have no basis for knowing that the Process is good, and in that case though we might look to the Process for the ultimate meaning of life, but the true goodness of the Process would remain hidden from us. The Incarnation makes clear that the Process is instrumental to the saving work of the Word. The Word must have a context in order to be understandable and relevant to man. That context is the Process. Since man is living in the Process, the Word comes to man by way of illuminating to man the Process and making the Process its context. Thus, the redemptiveness of the Process differs from the redemptiveness of the Word in that the Process is redemptive in structure only while the Word is redemptive in power, which is able to fill out the otherwise vacuous structure of the Process.

Man's life within the Process, and all of man's prospects being confined to, and in terms of the Process, requires that illumination of the Process to man must be the central and immediate purpose of the Word by way of its ultimate purpose of revealing God to man. The Word adds nothing to the Process that was not already there from the beginning; it is solely for man's benefit. Man

cannot add anything to the Process, either. All that man can do is to listen to the Word and live within the Process accordingly; and corresponding to the immediacy of the Word is a basic freedom in man to accept the Word and in accordance with the Word to move with the Process and so fulfill his life, or to move against the Process and break himself. The intent of the Word is to help man to move with the Process.

In our approach to the Word, we start by saying that self-worth occurs to one suddenly. This is a phenomenological affirmation: that is, here we are approaching the Word from man and man's experience of the Word. By contrast, Barth's approach to the word is essentially within the structures of Christian dogmatics. Assuming that this self-worth comes only from the Word, and we are affirming in faith that it does, we thus have confirmation of the Barthian doctrine of the suddenness and immediacy of the Word. Conversely, self-worth cannot be grasped through any gradual self-manipulation or attempts to control the Process. Self-worth comes as something other than the Process, as something that could never have resulted from any progression within the Process. However, the self-worth so received realizes itself and works itself out along the lines of the Process as illuminated by the Word. Thus, self-worth, the justification given to man by the Word, is compatible with the Process while

not being derived from it. This compatibility gains its definitive demonstration in the Incarnation, but is also directly inferrable from the doctrine of Creation in Genesis, which presents the Process as initiated by and continually empowered by the Word. This initial and continual sustaining of the Process by the Word is the subject of Barth's doctrines of Creation and providence.⁸¹ The compatibility of the Word with the Process provides the demonstrative assurance of the Word's ultimate soteriological efficacy.

It must be added that we cannot directly know in faith that the Word sustains the Process as well as us. We have to infer it ontologically in order to round out the unity of the system. Thus, for purposes of rational inference our references in this dissertation to the Word will of necessity be confined by and large to the Word which man receives by faith within the Process. That the Word also supports the Process as a whole cannot be denied, but as a truth of faith it enters into the analysis of the Word-Process dialectic only at secondary points of concern. For now, suffice it to say that when we attempt an ontological view of the Process as a whole, it is difficult to imagine the Process just happening: the Word that sustains man within the Process must also be

⁸¹Ibid., III/3, 3ff and especially p. 8.

the constant sustainer of the Process, though how such a thing comes about is not rationally explainable by means of a higher principle since there is no higher principle--Genesis merely presents Creation on the basis of the Word, and offers no higher explanation. Whitehead's error in this connection is to assume that because elements within the Process may be mutually reinforcing they are mutually empowering according to some source or principle of power within the Process, itself.⁸²

To sum up our analysis of the Word-Process dialectic so far, in being directed specifically to man, the Word always refers to the Process. This is because man lives in the Process and anything concerning his salvation must concern the Process. Any "salvation" that cannot be lived out within the Process is not salvation.

Here we seem to have transcended the Barthian dualism. And yet while Barth always works from a strong conviction of God's wholly-otherness, he vigorously seeks to bring Word and man together on the level of the given circumstances of man's life. Thus, he writes,

In dogmatic dialectic the Word of God is the intended point of departure.... But this Word is the Word addressed to man.... Man, however, is existing man. He is not mere thinking man....

⁸²E.g., Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), p. 33; also pps. 94, 130, 135, 339.

He is absorbed in the actuality of his existence.... Therefore dogmatics loses nothing more nor less than its object, and therefore all meaning,... if its problem concerning the purity of doctrine and the Word of God in Christian preaching is not also the problem of the Christian life of man, i.e., the life of man determined by the Word of God....⁸³

Also,

How can the kingdom of God, who is man's Creator, be merely the negation of his creatureliness? How can its coming be just the invasion of this creatureliness?⁸⁴

The focus in Barth's thought, however, never loses its centeredness in the Word: Barth never becomes absorbed in for instance, the structures of man's existence as a focus of interest in itself, but with what is perhaps an over-preoccupation with the Word, he only touches on specific questions about man's existence tangentially and sporadically. As he says, his starting point is always the Word: he doesn't just begin with the Word and move out from it, but maintains constant reference to it dialectically in connection with whatever else he wishes to consider. Thus, he considers everything in the direct light of the Word, and is cautious about speculating beyond the circle of that light. He just as readily asserts the significance of the Word over against man's existence as in terms of it:

⁸³Barth, op. cit., I/2, 792.

⁸⁴Ibid., IV/2, 215.

It is not the case that theology has to give a theological answer to the question of existence--as though somewhere in the void there is a problem of existence which, among other things, theology with its special presuppositions and methods has also to tackle. The Word of God is not the Word of God unless it precedes this question of man's existence, unless it is the origin even before it becomes its answer.⁸⁵

Nevertheless, Barth states the following in the same context:

...the theme of the Word is human existence, human life and volition and action.⁸⁶

Thus, the authoritarianness of Barth's Word does not finally negate its applicability and relevance. On the other hand, Barth's Word is overbearing enough, as it were, to determine from itself what its applicability and relevance is to be.

There is no denying that a profound tension exists between the Word, which can only be thought of as absolute, and the Process, which can only be thought of as relative. To experience both is to experience the tension between them. They meet man as different dimensions of life. Process presents man with a fatalistic dimension of life and, as Whitehead continually points out, offers up to man the only structures of fulfillment there are, and thus structures to which man must conform in order to exist at all. In the Process man is subjected to the

⁸⁵Ibid., I/2, 793.

⁸⁶Ibid.

constant reminder that anything important that comes his way consists of a gradually maturing network of occurrences that includes far more than his immediate interests and which may only touch on those interests only tangentially. While Process is the mode of emergence into being of all things, it seems to deny man's individual worth. This denial is confirmed by man's inability to build individual worth out of the Process alone, regardless of the ingenuity of his attempts. The Word, on the other hand, confronts man directly and personally in the individuality of his existence. To some extent the Word comes to man through the Process, but the Process itself never has the personal relevance that the Word alone has. Nor is the Process totally unpredictable like the Word, though the Process, too, has contingency within its ordered progressions.

In this regard man's confusion to a great extent lies in his assumption that it is the Process, perceived naturally and intuited rationally, that sustains his life and gives it meaningful development. Man is led to this conclusion by (1) the obvious fact that he is a product of the Process, (2) the common-sense observation that all of the options and prospects of life are contained within the givenness of the Process, and (3) the scientific observation that the Process does sustain life in terms of the basic vitality evident in all living things.

The Word, however, enters the human scene as a challenge to all assumptions that attribute to the Process the ultimate meaning of life. Cf. Barth:

According to the proclamation in the Word of Jesus the alien and miraculous and inconceivable thing that takes place in His actions in the world, and in defiance of all human being and perception and understanding, is nothing other than the kingdom of God.⁸⁷

The Word does not contradict the Process as it really is, but it undermines all tendencies to idolize the relativities of the Process into an ultimate structure of meaning. While the Process offers to man many forms of power with which he can affirm his life in defiance of God's claim upon him, the Word provides power that synthesizes within man all such lower, Process-derived forms of power into personal affirmations and focusses of meanings. In so doing, the Word witnesses to a deity whose plans run in decided directions regarding man, plans which take pronounced turns amid human events. Along this line Barth writes,

The power of God over all things is not blind power. He does not rule merely for the sake of ruling. He rules as a Father. His ruling is the ruling of a definite and conscious will. Behind it there is meaning and purpose, plan and intention. God has an aim for the creature when He preserves and accompanies it.⁸⁸

While man's individualism can be fully known only

⁸⁷Ibid., IV/2, 215.

⁸⁸Ibid., III/3, 155.

from the Word, a hint of this individualism is apparent even to an analytical scanning of the Process in the way in which the assertive individualism of the human personality seems quite anomalous within, and unexplainable by, the generalized patterns of the Process. The Word shows this anomaly to be far more deeply-rooted and far-reaching than natural rationalism suspects. But, even man's capacity to transcend the Process sufficiently to perceive surface patterns in it points to a uniqueness of man within it.⁸⁹ Since man's natural perceptions of the Process yield no conclusive explanations of his uniqueness, however, man easily ignores hints of his unique stature in his attempts to comprehend the Process scientifically.

Barth does not leave the Word-Process dichotomy dangling, but does offer attempts toward a specific, creative rapprochement between Word and Process in terms of Biblical eschatology. To begin with, in commenting on Jeremiah 23:28f, Barth draws a distinction between true and false prophecy by noting that false prophecy, while posing as consolation, does not offer man any illumination of the "real world and the existence of man":

The opposite to...(the) Word is obviously an imagined Word of God, but, however well and truly imagined, as a mere dream it remains outside the

⁸⁹ Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941), I, 1.

real world and existence of men, leaving the other subjects in the sphere of our world and existence unmolested, but also unilluminated and unconsoled in the depths of their creaturely existence.⁹⁰

Barth concludes that the Incarnation has once and for all done away with the view that "the Word of God is a transcendent authority above and beyond the dialectic of actual reality and therefore not a fire and a hammer, as in the saying of the prophet, but the telling of a dream."⁹¹ In the eschatological interim, in which we now are, there will be powers which will continue to oppose the power of Holy Scripture, which for Barth is the decisive locus of the Word. But, these powers have already been overcome in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.⁹² The tension, then, between the prophetic Word and the powers opposed to it is the tension between the final eschatological power of Jesus Christ and the interim powers of evil which assert themselves over against Jesus Christ. In the light of Christ's eschatological glory, when the Word confronts evil it does so as a recapitulation of the once-and-for-all conquest of evil in life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ:

...it may be that many penultimate prophetic words have still to be spoken, but the ultimate word has been already spoken, so that whatever

⁹⁰Barth, op. cit., I/2, 676.

⁹¹Ibid., I/2, 677.

⁹²Ibid., I/2, 676.

else can and must be said, however serious and difficult it may be in face of the contradiction raised, can so to speak, be said only in retrospect and by way of recapitulation.⁹³

For Barth the present, interim status of the eschatological Word is "hidden but complete".⁹⁴

Such is Barth's confrontation of Word and Process on the level of objective history. Barth's approach draws attention to the fact that, after all, the Process is transient, that the Word has had and will have the final say. His dualism at this point seems quite in accord with Pauline eschatology, though considerably more ontological reflection has gone into the Barthian notion of evil than is apparent in the Pauline notion of evil. Barth's eschatology together with his doctrine of providence bring Word and Process together in a metaphysical overview. All of Barth's efforts in this direction seem in accord with the dominant Biblical trends, indeed rounding out and clarifying those trends in a way that is very helpful for the faithful today. That Barth remains true to the Biblical thrusts is evidenced by the fact that his rounding out on the level of history does not in any way dull the immediate impact of the Word for the individual believer.

Thus, as Barth fully acknowledges, by the direc-

⁹³Ibid., I/2, 677.

⁹⁴Ibid., I/2, 678.

tions in which his thought moves, his overcoming of the Word-Process paradox, or what he might call the Word-man paradox, on the level of history and in the realm of absolutes, does not in the least solve the paradox for the individual receiver of, and believer in, the Word;⁹⁵ this may be seen in the effect that Barth indeed has not dulled the Word on this latter level: here it remains as confronting and wholly-other as ever; meaning that on the level of faith, eschatology and providence for Barth do not lessen the Word-man tension at all. Indeed, all Biblical eschatology alone underlines the Word-man tension, postponing consolations for believers. Thus, Paul finds it continually necessary to augment his eschatological proclamations with the immediate comforts of the Holy Spirit.⁹⁶ Barth does deal with the paradox on the subjective, experiential level of faith in the following way:

As the founding, maintaining and governing of the Church as a whole has a history, so the life of its members has a history. The continuity of history, the truth that at all times and in all places it is founded, maintained, and governed by God's Word, is hidden from the Church. The Church cannot see this. It cannot point to it and reconstruct it. It can only believe it to be the truth: and how can this happen except in the constant fact of its founding, maintaining, and governing. That the Church can only believe

⁹⁵Ibid., III/3, 23.

⁹⁶E.g., Cf. Romans 8:25 with 8:26, 8:35.

in this (but, of course, may and must believe in it) as a truth of God revealed to it, is shown in the fact that, as this event takes place, the Church will both give thanks and pray for its occurrence. It is precisely the same with the calling of the individual man and his awakening to faith and witness. Certainly, his whole existence is involved, the whole span of his life from his mother's womb to his death, and also its whole breadth, that is, his psychico-physical existence in the totality of its presuppositions, effects, and relationships.... It is either in this totality that I am a target for the Word of God, or not at all. It is either in this totality that the decision of the Word of God is taken concerning me, and I am born again by the Word, or not at all.... It is impossible to emphasize this too strongly. Its truth is compromised by every qualification. Yet while I may and must believe this truth in this totality-- and I do not believe it at all except in this totality-- it is still the case that I can only believe it. In faith and only in faith is it clear to me, because and in so far as my faith is faith in the Word of God and therefore in Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ, I am revealed to myself as he who in the totality of his existence is received and accepted by Him. I shall then accept this revelation as one accepts revelation in faith: I shall accept it with thankfulness and prayer. But apart from faith, and therefore apart from Jesus Christ, this truth is always hidden from me in its totality (without which it is not this truth). But in faith we always have to do with a single event, an individual decision, in which I decide in conformity with the decision of the Word of God. If in this event we link up with the fact that we have believed before, and if in this event we receive the promise that we will again believe in the future, if there is thus a state of believing which embraces past, present, and future, faith itself is not identical with this state of believing. As distinct from it, it is never something which is there already. It is always a gift which has to be seized again and again. We can have it, and the retrospect and the prospect which it gives (and what can truly be called a Christian state of believing), only as it is given to us as a gift, and we grasp it as such.⁹⁷

⁹⁷Ibid., I/2, 705, 706.

This solution to the Word-man paradox (for Barth obviously intends it as such a solution) is in substance the same as the one which this dissertation has sought to employ, with the absolute supremacy of the Word elevating the Word in the mind of the believer incomparably above and beyond the significance of all possible developments within the Process, by which men are so prone to regulate their lives. The Barthian doctrine of the Word, to which this dissertation basically subscribes, makes the believer directly dependent on the Word, both in the immediate decisions and the ultimate values of his life, regardless of the fact that the Process is continually before him while the Word is not necessarily continually before him. This is the hard doctrine to hold to: the most devout Christians easily transfer their confidence and allegiance from the unpredictableness of the Word to the continuity of the Process.

But, has Barth really solved the paradox? Or, has he, as usual, underlined it instead? He approaches the paradox via negativa, fully aware of the pertinence of dealing with the paradox, but cautious every inch of the way lest he resolve the paradox too straight-forwardly and simply, and therefore not at all in a way that corresponds to reality. He never lets us forget the overruling power of the Word in its transcendent otherness. But, in the net result from what Barth has said in

this context, what has the Word in common with the continuities of the Christian's daily life? Nothing. If there is anything like continuity in the believer's experience of the Word, it is a continuity that must be constantly renewed. Therefore, any such continuity of the Word is fundamentally disengaged from all natural continuities. Barth does offer a merging of man's continuity with God's continuity in his doctrine of the divine accompanying,⁹⁸ in effect he finally leaves it to God to overcome the paradox, whereas when he deals with the paradox directly he can find no dogmatic resolution of it.

Barth reminds us that when we are dealing with the Word, we are dealing with that which affirms, the only power in the universe which affirms ultimately. Vis-a-vis this ultimate power, all that can be said of the Process is that it is that which does the carrying out to concrete completion. Any attempt to bridge the inequality of these two realms is bound to turn out artificial by all which faith knows to be true. This is all to the good. But let it also be remembered that when we are dealing with the Word we are in direct confrontation with Him Who makes Himself known directly in the Word: we are not helplessly dependent on a sporadic thunderbolt that ravishes and disrupts to the delight of some cosmic demon.

⁹⁸Ibid., III/3, 90ff.

When we are dealing with the Word, we are dealing with Jesus Christ, Who promised to be with us always, to Whom children came gladly, Who promised us a yoke that would be easy, that would fit. Here we receive Barth's full assent.⁹⁹ If we place our faith in a Word that in jealous independence resists all organized understanding, the life which is promised us in the Fourth Gospel can be nothing but a psychotic shambles. But if we place our faith in a Word that is none other than Jesus Christ in all of His healing power, in all of the steadfastness of His earthly life, in all of the trustworthiness evidenced in the Holy Spirit in the Church, we not only have the fulfillment there is, we have the only healing and integration there is from the most basic biological essentials to the most sublime certitude of spirit.

A doctrine of the Word unwittingly separated from Jesus Christ, but maintained in its transcendent supremacy, can be nothing but a demonic nihilism, the annihilation of all hope. But, a doctrine of the Word maintained in absolute supremacy and true to everything that can be known to be true about Jesus Christ (what can be known can only be given, of course, by the Word) can but underscore the soteriological trustworthiness of God in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is our assurance of the sav-

⁹⁹Ibid., III/3, 28, 29.

ingness of the Word. We hasten to add, however, that this savingness can become only terror and suspense when man turns away from the Word, as man is so wont to do. So, if we are to view the Word as the means by which God saves man, we must conclude that any wilfullness and disruption toward man attributed to the Word can only be a reflection on man and not God.¹⁰⁰ We cannot, however, evade the oppositions which the Word in fact makes to man, but in such instances we can only interpret God's action as a merciful blocking of man's escape route, a merciful crippling of man's every gesture of independence. Certainly nothing can come from man's temporal arrogance that will have the slightest stature in eternity; and if the fruits of man's arrogance must be toppled before man will turn to God as his only hope, to the God Who only can save man for eternity, God's toppling of man manifests His eternal mercy indeed.

As we have tried to document where possible, Barth concurs with most of what we have just tried to say. However, going back to Barth's extended statement above, Barth's affirmation of redemption in terms of man's "totality" is unconvincing until he is willing to grant that this totality is the same totality as the totality of the demonstrable developments of man's life. Barth is

¹⁰⁰Ibid., III/3, 129.

almost willing to do this--indeed, he seems to do it in his most forceful moments. But, he is nevertheless cautious about attributing the status of reality to natural phenomena. He can only believe from this totality--as if he were straining to grasp (his word is seize) that which denies the totality, and to escape the implied unreality of this totality. We must counter that either the Word, in all of its occurrences and facets, affirms the Process or denies the Process; and we cannot imagine how the Word could deny the Process, even though we have maintained that the Word illuminates the relativity of the Process and denies man's absolutizing of the Process. Therefore, if the Word affirms the Process, and man's totality within it, belief in the Word is not a credulous straining but a reconciliation to one's totality through the Word--indeed, the only reconciliation to one's totality that is possible. This receives Barth's affirmation.¹⁰¹ That the Word reveals to us the true significance of the Process does not compromise the significance of the Word, because only the Word can perform that indispensable function for man. And if the Word points man in the direction of proximate goals and achievements, proximate in the way that man is finite, there need be no confusion as to the overriding significance and power of

¹⁰¹Ibid., III/3, 123, 146, 148.

the Word, itself, because only the Word can, when all is said and done, justify man's life.¹⁰² Thus, Luther observed that it was just as necessary that a man, regardless of his achievement, be humble before God at the end of his life as at the beginning of it. But, we must insist that if man is to obey the Word, it must orient him to the Process in some graspable way, the Process must open up to him in the light of the Word as being worthy of his selfless participation in it.

Soteriological in intent, the Word has the Process for its specific content. And while man is completely dependent upon the Word, he is equipped by the Process for implementing in the Process that which he is ultimately dependent upon: the ultimate harmony that must prevail between Word and Process must work itself out for man in this way. Because of the harmony between Word and Process evidenced in the Incarnation, the Word comes to us through human words and actions, and in this way is understandable to man without in the slightest altering its eternal weight and gravity--¹⁰³ instead, its eternal significance is that which is made understandable by human modes of presentation. The Church is, of course, where ideally, and with the accompaniment of the Holy

¹⁰²Cf. Ibid., III/3, 16.

¹⁰³Cf. Ibid., III/4, 44.

Spirit, the Word is likely to receive its most sympathetic hearing and response. All of this is in strict accord with Barth's observations, as typified as follows:

It is because God's eternal Word became flesh that there are prophets and apostles and Holy Scripture, and it comes to us in the form of a human word.¹⁰⁴

In respectful acknowledgment of this dissertation's dependence on Barth it should be noted that if Barth leaves the general state of man's existence in an iron-clad Word-Time paradox, he just as forcefully ascribes a uniqueness to the Church, and the "covenant of grace" wherein the miracle occurs which breaks the paradox.¹⁰⁵

In view of the significance attributed to the Process by the Word, my decision in response to the Word is twofold: (1) whether or not to accept the ultimate worth which the Word confers upon me, and (2) whether or not to accept the Process as the Word illuminates it to me. The second part is contingent on the first because the worth conferred by the Word, if accepted, is indispensable to true participation in the Process: one can truly live only from that position of strength. Likewise, the second part is just as vital to salvation as the first because without acceptance of the Process one has nowhere to go; and when the Word confers worth in

¹⁰⁴Ibid., I/2, 699.

¹⁰⁵E.g., Ibid., III/3, 45, 72, 149.

vain, it does not confer it for long. To accept the worth conferred by the Word is to become motivated by it, and true repentance is signified by a willingness to live from the Word amid all of the dangers of the Process and with the ultimate futility of the relativity of the Process hanging overhead,¹⁰⁶ and yet in acknowledgment that this Process is the only Process that is available to, and right for, one.¹⁰⁷

The Word reveals the Process to be monistic: whatever is proclaimed about the Process by the Word totally pervades the Process¹⁰⁸ for there is no provincialness in the Word--therein lies the "continuity" of the Word for faith. The Word illuminates one's personal existence within the Process--therein lies its character as unique event to the one receiving it.

Though Barth does intentionally cope with the Word-Process paradox, or what he might call the Word-man paradox, he does not succeed, as we have noted, in receiving the paradox in an existential way, that is, from man's side of the paradox, in a way that can be corroborated with man's existence on a day-to-day level. This omission is consistent with Barth's theological presup-

¹⁰⁶cf. Ibid., III/3, 14, 154.

¹⁰⁷cf. Ibid., III/3, 241.

¹⁰⁸cf. Whitehead, op. cit., p. 42.

positions, which maintain that the Word-man paradox has already been resolved by God--was resolved by God before time began. Thus, the resolution which Barth offers is an absolute one, in God's hands and on God's initiative.

...always we have to do with a movement in which God Himself is the terminus a quo and the creature the terminus ad quem.¹⁰⁹

Apparently Barth cannot resolve the paradox dogmatically on the level of man's existence because such an answer would give a dogmatic finality to man's existence which could only deny the fact that God's ways are not man's ways. Hence the answer which he proposes is one which man can only accept "on faith", regardless of the concrete circumstances of his existence to the contrary.

Consistent with this resolution is Barth's assertion that it is not necessary for man to know everything about how God overcomes the Word-man paradox;¹¹⁰ which is to say that the savingness of Jesus Christ may be a mystery which God cannot or will not disclose to man, but as an undisclosed mystery it is not a hindrance to man's living from it in the Process. Barth's doctrine of providence, however, conditions to some extent his argument along this line, with the understanding that providence itself is an undisclosed mystery.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., III/3, 429.

¹¹⁰Ibid., III/3, 442.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer commented on Barth's resolution of the Word-man paradox as follows:

Barth is well aware that he has to define the total I as historical, yet his concepts have already been over-defined before he approaches that of the historical. When he comes to it, he doubtless says everything that needs to be said, but he has unfortunately said too many things beforehand. Consequently he can no longer render the I comprehensible as a historical total I. As against this we maintain that the essence of the actus directus does not lie in its timelessness but in its intentionality towards Christ, which is not repeatable at will, because it is freely given by God.... For this reason alone it is not amenable to demonstrative 'heres and theres', even if it does fulfill itself in the concrete, conscious, psychic even whose material may be reproduced and submitted to reflexion.¹¹⁰

In his way Bonhoeffer grounded existentially the redeemed self, thus taking the redeemed self out of heaven and bringing it to earth. But, because he will not submit the redeemed self in earnest to the "heres and theres" of existence, reserving it for its "intentionality toward Christ", which is freely given by God, he has not resolved the Word-man paradox in a way which will attribute concrete continuity to the redeemed self. Bonhoeffer does defer to the necessity of the self's fulfilling itself "in the concrete", where it can reflect on itself, but he intentionally restrains himself from attempting to show how momentary intentionality toward Christ can be

¹¹⁰Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Act and Being (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), p. 102f.

constantly renewed so as to become continuous "in the concrete". Thus, for Bonhoeffer, the Word-man paradox is not resolvable existentially, though Bonhoeffer's existential grounding of man makes it a genuine paradox.

The notion of Process, taken as it is from a philosopher who had secular presuppositions, introduces new possibilities in our understanding of the Word-man paradox. The result is at least a more realistic rendering of the paradox. Barth has already shown the way to a quasi-resolution of the paradox in his idea that the Word mediates God to man by illuminating man's existence. Can we go further than that with the help of the notion of Process? Yes, because the notion of Process says something about man and his life that Barth cannot say. Barth must derive everything from what his faith tells him is true; that is, he can only start with dogmatic presuppositions about God's supremacy with the consequent soteriological necessity of God's Word for man. But, Barth cannot say anything about man apart from what the Word tells him is true about man:

Who and what man...is, is a question which is not left to any natural process, fate or chance, but is determined by the creation and providence, by the reconciling and redeeming action, of the God to whose command, to whose claim, decision and judgment, man is subject....¹¹¹

¹¹¹Barth, op. cit., III/4, 17.

Because Barth derives man directly and predominantly from the Word, his Word-man paradox is not a genuine paradox, in the way that Bonhoeffer's statement of the paradox is genuine, especially in view of Barth's assertion that God has overcome this paradox before the onset of history.

Barth's Word-man paradox is not the one experienced in the Christian faith because it is possible for man to be known, and to know himself, apart from any recognizable intervention by the Word. Whitehead has proved this.

Barth, too, notes the possibility in passing.¹¹² So, if we set man in the Process, as Whitehead does, rather than taking man as the Word gives him to us, the Word-man paradox cannot be dogmatically assumed to have a final, primordial resolution. Obviously, if the Process is in flux, and man is in flux with it, the Word-man paradox has a different complexion than if "man" is a notion dogmatically derived from the Word, or if man is taken solely as he is illuminated by the Word. This is not to say that man truly, in the sense of finally, can be known in any other way than by the illumination by the Word. Whitehead merely shows us what man looks like incidentally and transiently through secular lenses. No respecter of the Barthian approach could accept Whitehead's view as final. But Whitehead, with his self-imposed and self-

¹¹²Ibid., III/4, 41f; also I/2, 705.

acknowledged limit of incompleteness and relativity in his views, does draw attention to something which is also granted by the orthodox tradition going back to the Reformers, namely, that man can know himself apart from Christian dogmatic presuppositions in a relative, pragmatic sensory way. The entire tradition of secular humanism, of which Whitehead is a recent significant link, depends on, and demonstrates, this possibility. The notion of Process, therefore, adds to the Word-man paradox a secularly-derived notion of man which is a realistic check on the dogmatically-derived one, and as such is essentially correct as far as it goes. Henceforth, we will refer to this paradox as the Word-Process paradox. Just because man is completely sustained by the Word does not mean that the Word is the only direct source of information about man.

If this secularly-derived notion of Process is to make a distinctive difference in our treatment of the paradox, we must be able to locate the distinctive characteristic which the Whiteheadian notion of Process projects onto man. That distinctive characteristic we take to be the seeming characteristic of the Process as a whole (since Whitehead does not make man an exception to the Process): self-generating self-synthesizing power.¹¹³

¹¹³E. g., Whitehead, op. cit., p. 88ff.

From this we infer that personality is a concentration of power which becomes shaped and focussed through its interaction with elements of power in its environment. Such seems to be a basic principle of becoming in all of Whitehead's Process.

Power, as we find it displayed in natural vitality, and as it is set forth in Whitehead's thought, is fluctuating and relative. It pulsates, synthesizes, consolidates, subdivides, dies. Therefore, it consists of phenomena not directly inferrable from Christian dogmatics, which must be confined in substance to metaphysical absolutes, but can be inferred only from scientific investigation. We can say dogmatically that all power in nature, once we isolate its effects and analyze them, is derived from the Word. But such an affirmation would have no direct basis in Christian experience: it would rather be a metaphysical speculation from the Christian faith as a whole as a necessary metaphysical concomitant to the Christian faith with Biblical precedents. As such this affirmation alone does not have the faith-generating strength or insight to overcome the Word-Process paradox for faith. Phenomenologically, power perhaps can be thought of as the capacity to effect change in the Process, and as being manifested within the Process in terms of the change which it effects. Thus, when we speak of power we are speaking realistically of the causality of the Process.

If Process is power, that is, power organized in specific ways, the resolving of the Word-Process paradox requires that it be shown how the Word as power meets, and takes effect within, the power of the Process, according to the organizations of the power in the Process, while remaining true to the Word's dogmatic meaning-content as Barth extracts it for us from the Judeo-Christian tradition. Barth touches on this line of thought in his own way:

The Word of God is also natural and corporeal, because without that it would not be the Word of God directed to us men as spiritual-natural beings, really coming to us in a way in which we are real: that is why preaching itself is also a physical event.¹¹⁴

Also:

We are told that this reality and its truth-the being of Jesus Christ, and our being in Him, in the concealment of His crucifixion-are power. They are not just static power, but active; not just latent, but manifest. They have the force of truth; of something that really has occurred.... And this event wills to make itself known, and can and does do so.¹¹⁵

We have already asserted that the Word justifies as well as illuminates (p. 39). Our procedure now requires an elaboration of this assertion. Our original assertion was based on the Barthian idea that the Word sustains man by way of justifying man, as the decisive difference

¹¹⁴Barth, op. cit., I/1, 151.

¹¹⁵Ibid., IV/2, 298.

it makes in man's existence, and therefore it must decisively empower man in his existence. Is this empowering of man a different kind of power than the power of the Process as a whole? Obviously there can only be one kind of power if Word and Process are to have primordial unity. But, the Word as power is distinctive within the Process in that it enters the Process as the one power within the Process which is self-authenticating. As such it takes up residence, so to speak, within the Process, fully at home within the Process, beyond any danger of being dislodged by the inherent powers of the Process, and acting as the vanguard of fulfillment for man within the Process, though fulfillment apart from man is an inevitable feature of the Process. Thus there is in actuality no dualistic alienation between Word and Process since the two are of the same kind of power. It follows that their coming together is more than an illumination by the Word of the Process, though certainly it is that. Between them there is perfect harmony on all levels of power from the most basic forms of nuclear phenomena to the highest levels of spiritual experience in man. And when the Word illuminates the Process to man, it reveals this profound harmony which man could not know apart from the Word and without which man cannot live. When the Word-Process dialectic is finally resolved in man, as Hegel's dialectic culminates in self-affirming

Spirit,¹¹⁶ the resolution of the Word-Process dialectic can only be a dynamic one growing out of the self-affirming power of the Word and forward-moving with the Process: only in that way does the Word-Process dualism, with its Manichean overtones, emerge as a dynamic monism.

The power of the Word takes place in the Process as that which synthesizes, unifies, and heals. This taking place goes on automatically in all parts of the Process apart from man, and in man as man receives the Word by acknowledging with allegiance and obedience his complete dependence on the Word. When men receive the Word they are healed socially as well as individually: indeed the two kinds of healing are mutually reinforcing in such a way as to affirm man's personal existence within its social context. The Word received in Christian faith enters the Process as personal self-confidence and health in individual men so as to expand and overcome alienation between men, being communicated spontaneously from man to man and encountering men with the opportunity to receive it for themselves. That which drives men apart is not from the Word, but from man's self-assertive attempts to be like God, sometimes under the guise of "pious" self-

¹¹⁶Paul Tillich, Perspectives on 19th and 20th Century Protestant Theology (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 118ff.

effacement. Only the Word brings men together in such a way as to focus and display their individual worth and identity, and to harmonize their self-assertions.¹¹⁷

The Word heals by synthesizing within and between men. The Word creates within the Process through men by justifying men within their social encounters and existential self-awarenesses. Men respond to the self-confidence and vision which the Word gives to other men. All of this is substantially in accord with the becoming which Whitehead described. What Whitehead saw from a distance, Christians enjoy through their faith.

¹¹⁷Barth, op. cit., IV/2, 314ff.

CHAPTER III

MAN IN PARADOX

If there is a rapprochement between Word and Process, it takes place, and works itself through, in man, for as we have maintained, the Word enters the Process for the benefit of man alone within the Process. Man is in the curious predicament of outwardly being the product of the Process but inwardly being completely dependent on the Word. So, within man himself the Word-Process cleavage is complete, and the result certainly is man's wholeness when they become integrated. So a consideration of the possibilities of a functional relationship between Word and Process would seem to be a necessary adjunct to any approach to the problems men must solve in order to live well. Conversely, no attempt to bring Word and Process together dialectically can be on solid ground unless man himself, in whom this dialectic in fact must take place in some form or other, is brought into the picture.

We infer that ontologically the Word and Process are one because it is possible to witness their working together in power in and for man. On the other hand, man experiences them as distinct. This is man's paradox. Both of these points were noted in the previous chapter without any attempt to combine them into an inclusive

unity. It has been speculated that ontologically Word and Process are united; else how could we ever hope to unify them in existence? Or, furthermore where could we find a higher principle with which to hold an ontological Word-Process dualism together? At the same time we have tried to show that existentially for man Word and Process seem at times far apart. They come together for man only because the Word comes as an illumination of the Process to man and an empowering and justifying of man within the Process. But, man experiences no final synthesis of the two within the events of his life.

Word and Process seem to be ontologically together and for man existentially apart for the following reason. The Word, to begin with, has two functions: (1) to uphold Creation, and (2) to sustain and guide man. At the same time, man is based on the Process, and is self-determinative in confrontation with the Word. Apart from man there is no Word-Process cleavage. Within man the cleavage is related to the fact that the relationship between him in the Process is one thing while his relationship with the Word is another: man receives everything from the Process through no effort or reflection on his part, and here the Word is mediated to him indirectly as that which sustains him and the Process together; however, man receives guidance and sustenance directly from the Word only sporadically, or rather, dialectically,

and through a sometimes painful process of his becoming willingly oriented to the Word, for here man's freedom of self-determination prevails and he can learn and orient himself by the Word only at a slow pace. Thus, it takes man's adjustment to the Word which he receives existentially some time to catch up with the Word which has been mediated to him ontologically through the Process. Here is where the religious tension of man's existence lies. Through all this the ontological kinship of Word and Process assures that the Word, when it comes to man, benefits man according to his mundane, in addition to ultimate, needs.

The significance of the Word for man may perhaps best be seen in connection with man's dilemma of having almost unlimited freedom of self-determination, but limited insight into himself and his existence. It would be grossly misleading if we did not acknowledge our indebtedness to Reinhold Niebuhr's insights into man at this point:

Man has always been his own most vexing problem. How shall he think of himself? Every affirmation which he may make about his stature, virtue, or place in the cosmos becomes involved in contradictions when fully analyzed.¹¹⁸

More to our point is the following from Niebuhr:

¹¹⁸Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941), I, 1.

...man is a child of nature, subject to its vicissitudes, compelled by its necessities, driven by its impulses, confined within the brevity of the years which nature permits its varied organic form, allowing them some, but not too much latitude. The other less obvious fact is that man is a spirit who stands outside of nature, life, himself, his reason and the world.¹¹⁹

From both Niebuhr and Whitehead we infer that man attempts to understand his immediate existence by viewing it in the perspective of a past-present-future continuum, negating what has been distasteful and affirming toward the future what has been salutary; furthermore, the only past-present-future continuum imaginable to him is one based on analogies drawn from observable growth in nature. The minimal optimism which keeps man going is based to a large extent on this hope in the inevitability of gradualness. In later years in a man's life complications occur as he looks back at his inept beginnings: his attempts to absolutize around himself his past-present-future continuum are thwarted by the obvious evolutionary character of the continuum, and much mythologizing results.

On the other hand, the mainstream of modern existentialist thought has been to the effect that man does not find the ultimate meaning of his existence by viewing it on a past-present-future "growth" continuum.

¹¹⁹Ibid., p. 3.

Camus, particularly, has pressed the point that the certainty of death has relativised all meaning-constructs which man can devise, whether partially based on experience or not.¹²⁰ The existentialists have in fact stripped man's existence of any ultimate meaning that could be derived from assumptions of continuity and inevitability, whether imagined or real in a relative sense, and left man in the honesty of a meaningless immediacy. For the existentialists meaning cannot be authentically posited externally in man's existence; man must derive from within himself in every moment the meaning of his existence with no reference to external structures, which are seen as fleeting mirages. Such reducing of man's existence down to its dregs can be taken by theology as the unavoidable prelude to demonstrating how the Word both meets man in the immediacy of his self-determination, and reveals the true structures of his existence, all the while remaining grounded in such a way as to transcend all ebbing and flowing of natural developments. This completion by the Word of the existentialists' fragmentary universe seems plausible from a purely rationalistic point of view,¹²¹ but such

¹²⁰Albert Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus (New York: Vintage, 1959), 44ff.

¹²¹Viz., Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), I, 60.

plausibility is not important in a theological orientation in which the Word taken as ever-changing and ever newly present to faith.

For our purposes the structure of Whitehead's Process allows sufficient freedom, in its openness and contingency, for the Word to function in its full latitude: Whitehead has afforded us with an epoch-making combination of continuity and event, of freedom and meaning, on the level of naturalistic developments.¹²² Though Whitehead apparently did not seriously anticipate in his system the role played by the Judeo-Christian Word in man's existence, there is ample opening in his system for the Word because of the system's radical openness to the future, enveloped as it is by a general ontological openness. Our problem has been to show how the Word could enter the relativity of such a system as Whitehead's while not having its transcendent meaning, in the Barthian sense, diluted.

Natural man's need for salvation is to him only implicit rather than explicit, despite the uncertainties and ambiguities of his existence. Natural man knows that he lacks fulfillment, but he easily anticipates his fulfillment as an inevitable outcome of his prowess in con-

¹²² Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), p. 113.

trolling the Process for his own ends. The Process is there with its mysteries and untapped potentials for man's existence. At the same time merely to exist man must come to terms in some creative way with the Process. The undeniability of the Process, with its open-endedness toward future possibilities, seems to make it the quintessential touch-stone of man's faith in himself. At the same time the Process, taken as man finds it particularly on the level of obvious natural occurrence, is an implicit denial of man's claim to ultimacy: the relativities of the Process only underscore man's relativity while the scientifically regular patterns of the Process deny man's thirst for personal significance. But, even though the Process remains to man soteriologically ambiguous, there is no doubt that man lives and betters himself, sometimes with a rapidity that has no worldly precedent, through the Process. It is not always clear what drives man in his mastering of the Process, but if salvation for himself is what he seeks, his most spectacular achievements are no more than dismal failures.

Man is relative in all of his outward manifestations and yet he craves for his personal existence absolute significance.¹²³ A once-for-all life without ultimate significance is unthinkable to man. Socially,

¹²³Cf. Niebuhr, op. cit., p. 186.

modern man seems to have attained some degree of stability, but personally, man still seems very much in doubt about himself. The achievements and operations of modern civilization have confronted man, as no Calvinistic preacher could, with his lack of individual self-sufficiency and worth. Barring nuclear disintegration, civilization seems to be slowly advancing, with nations becoming more sophisticated in handling their affairs while not necessarily advancing in mutual cooperation, but the personal destinies of men have become increasingly uncertain and meaningless. Man is not satisfied with the Process, but there seems to be no obvious alternative to turn to.¹²⁴

Man can decide whether or not to live in the Process. Most men live in the Process on a pragmatic-materialistic level and find their personal meaning elsewhere. Or if they commit themselves wholly, it is usually an absolutized fabrication of the Process to which they commit themselves. Few men make the true Process the sole bearer of their hope, if they have a consciously worked out hope at all; these few men are Christians because the Christian is one who is not ashamed to confine himself in toto to the Process, having been cured of his futile

¹²⁴Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics (Edinburgh: Clark, 1936-1958), IV/2, 422.

quest beyond the Process for absolute significance by the absoluteness of the Word. Because the Word affirms the Process, the Word enables man to affirm the Process for himself. Thus, Christian man is the only man who is fully at home within the Process with no hidden desire to get away from it all. The redemptiveness of the Process has been assured to all by Jesus. To want to wrest oneself loose from the Process now, therefore, is an avowed expression of rebellion against God. Man's problem is not that the world is too much with him; rather his own "world" has gotten in the way of his relationship with God, and now man cannot find his way to the real world. The tragedy of this is that when man rejects the Process, he loses his existence, for nothing can exist outside the Process.¹²⁵ Man's resistance to God's Word, in the Barthian sense, must have its existential equivalent which turns out to be man's refusal to live in the Process which God has put under man's dominion. Thus, Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden of Eden because they had already attempted to live beyond its bounds and were no longer satisfied to live within the regulations which God had built into it. If it is plausible that the salvation of the Word must have its existential manifestation within the Process, it is

¹²⁵Ibid., IV/2, 400.

equally plausible that rejection of the Word results existentially in the rejection of the Process.

When man is seen against the Process the completeness of his fallen condition is obscured in two ways (1) man concretely is always inclined to be ostensibly identified with the goodness of the Process in some way; indeed evil usually takes on the respectable shadings of its immediate environment; and (2) the relativity of the Process is easily identified as the cause of man's fallenness (seen as general misery) over-against ideal absolutes and states of existence which man is capable of lifting up to himself; however the relativity of the Process has nothing to do with man's fallenness, which, in fact, results from man's rejection of the relativity of the Process through his rejection of the absolute Word. It is against only the Word that man's fallen condition can be seen to be complete. The first of the above errors in diagnosing man consists in a seemingly harmless recognition of the goodness of the Process with the result that this goodness is extended and imputed to man as well, man obviously being a product of the Process like everything else. The second error consists in a false condemnation of the Process because of its relativity, and a blaming of man's obvious wretchedness on that relativity. Classic Greek thought, carried over into the Renaissance and Enlightenment, never seemed able

to avoid the first error, while modern Romanticism extending through Kierkegaard into Existentialism has not been able to avoid the second pitfall. Only with Karl Barth and Reinhold Niebuhr does there begin in modern times an unflinching appraisal of the ultimacy of man's wretchedness, ultimate because of the sin which man freely commits against his Creator.

Man is truly aware of his absolute hopelessness only in the moment when he is struck by the Word.¹²⁶ To see how this awareness takes place, we will enlist the help of none other than John Wesley. The insights of both Barth and Niebuhr are only peripheral at this point because of their main concern to project man's condition into general overviews; neither seems to concentrate explicitly on the inner revolution of man's self-understanding caused by the Word, though both draw on insights from psychological and existentialist thinkers. At any rate, Wesley is most helpful at this point with his outline of the stages of conversion, which he sets forth in his sermon, "The Spirit of Bondage and Adoption".¹²⁷ Here Wesley shrewdly analyzes the experience of conversion in terms of three steps, rather than the two which are

¹²⁶Ibid., IV/2, 385ff.

¹²⁷John Wesley, "The Spirit of Bondage and Adoption" in his Sermons on Several Occasions (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, J. Alfred Sharp, 1787), I, 102-117.

usually contrasted in Barth's writings. The three steps are dimly visible also in Barth's thought,¹²⁸ and traces of them can be found in Niebuhr's thought, but the three steps are never set forth by either man as cogently as by Wesley.

(1) Once-born existence. This is the state of man who knows nothing of God's reality and his need for salvation. All of his striving is oriented to "worldly" achievement; i.e., he is confident of attaining the kind and amount of achievement and status that his secular culture finds respectable. Beyond that he neither questions the meaning of his life nor is he concerned about the inevitability of death. Because his self-worth is reasonably secure in secular categories, he is totally complacent toward God. He may become hostile toward God, however, in the event of failure in his secular striving.

Until now, in this dissertation we have referred to this man as the natural man who intuits the Process according to demonstrable causes and effects within the Process, and because he orders these intuitions around his own self-interest, he never participates in the Process as an end in itself: his absolutizing of himself at the center of his existence causes the relativity of the Process, by contrast, to appear odious to him. He is

¹²⁸ Cf. Barth, op. cit., IV/2, 376, 393ff, 485, 522ff

upheld by the Word, but does not know it because he either fails to receive or accept the Word when it illuminates his existence in the Process. Therefore, he is what Reinhold Niebuhr described as a child of darkness.

This man has a complacent or patronizing attitude toward others. This attitude may turn into paranoid fear if the implicit insecurity of his self-worth becomes explicit because of misfortune in the secular categories in which his self-worth is couched. In any event he assumes that power (political, economic, physical, et.) is advantageous over moral rectitude (i.e., behavior which is predictably selfless), although moral rectitude is looked upon in this man's value structure as a usable commodity in those whom he desires to manipulate. Furthermore, a facade of moral rectitude seems to be a necessary accompaniment with the power that achieves success if that is to be respectable; exceptions here occur in secular cultures which are totally cynical about means to ends, and ends as well, and which therefore may openly militate against all signs of moral rectitude, whether real or artificial.

Because of the success-orientation of his self-worth, this man lives by the law of pragmatic cause-and-effect despite his perhaps militant disregard of moral and religious law. Thus, he carries the burden of living under the law, it having been spelled out to him what he

must do, the mark he must hit, the quota he must reach if he is to continue to survive and be respected in his secular circle. However, compared to the insecurity of the man under absolute moral-religious law, his insecurity is only implicit, hidden by real prospects of his actually being able to meet the relative requirements of the pragmatic law of success. This implicit insecurity becomes explicit only in the event of obvious failure in his attempts. He then may become paranoid, i.e., rationally cautious to an extreme. He approaches nervous and/or mental breakdown only if the Word, which secretly sustains him, is withdrawn as punishment or as God's means of bringing the man to the threshold of conversion.

(2) Existence under religious law without the consolation of Grace. This is the state of the man who is aware of his need for salvation because God has revealed Himself to the man through the Word. But, because this man has not accepted the Word, his need for salvation goes unmet. His difficulty is that this need remains a vague anxiety and restless searching which cannot be relieved by the attainment of secular respectability. Rather, all secular respectability is seen as trivial and even absurd in its relativity alongside the manifest absoluteness of the Word. This man may continue to strive for secular respectability, depending on how locked into it are the circumstances of his life, but he does not

attain satisfaction. His self-worth is now explicitly insecure regardless of all the outward circumstances of his life. Within himself he knows that he stands accused, but like Job he searches day and night in vain for his Accuser, and can find no assuaging of his nameless guilt in the mundane patterns of his external existence.

Because this man refuses to receive the Word that has been offered him, the illumination of his existence by the Word puts his existence under judgment according to the Law of God. His relative achievements in the secular realm pale alongside his absolute guilt and the total jeopardy of his self-worth in the bad light of the Word. His previous rational-pragmatic appraisal of the Process now withers in the light of the Word, and his striving for secular success, even when at its mark, is burdened by an awareness of absolute futility.

He relates to others in an unfeeling, rigid, dogmatic, legalistic, and even overbearing way. However, overbearing assertiveness inevitably causes social repercussions which add external insecurity to his inner insecurity. And his legalistic pressures on others rebound back as pressures on himself.

This man is in bondage to the Law because he has not accepted the Word by obeying it through participation in the Process as illuminated by the Word; and the only existence external to the Process is bondage to the Law,

which the Apostle Paul described in such great detail. When one has only the Law to look to for meaning, guidance, and consolation, one's self-worth is called into question in every moment. There is no support for this man's life, and the Law becomes a constant reminder of this. When one is outside the Process, one has a negative relation to the Law, because the Law is the structure of the Process. Outside the Process the Law becomes the sole, compulsory bulwark against chaos, a hard, desolate place where nothing can grow, and where everything is learned through adversity.¹²⁹ This man may appreciate the benefits of Grace, but his refusal to obey the Word places him in a state of sporadic graciousness of the Word, just enough of the Word's consolation to make him bitterly restless and apprehensive. If he tries to use the enabling power of the Word strictly for his own purposes, the sharp alternations between Grace and Judgment leave him with no consolation.

This man does not undergo nervous or mental collapse unless the sustenance of the Word is taken from him. The Word can externally illuminate this man's abyss while continuing to sustain him internally and psychically. The external illumination drives the man to fulfill the Law of God and therefore to assuage his guilt, but his

¹²⁹cf. Ibid., IV/2, 485.

guilt is compounded by his inevitable failures to do this. Thereupon he may turn in his futility and frustration and make it a point to break the Law of God in a feverish attempt to focus his guilt in what promises him to be a manageable form; he particularly strikes out at those whom his new spiritual sensitivity indicates lack of the Judgment which he is experiencing. Because of the namelessness of the guilt which he is attempting to focus, his lashings out are totally irrational in their seeming randomness. Saul's attacks of the Christians is a foremost Biblical example. Despite such defiant transgressions, however, the man continues to be held accountable to God's Law both in terms of his total guilt under the Word, as well as in terms of the guilt now attached to his specific thoughts and acts of malice. Obstinance has not yet exhausted the resources of God, either. The Word has thus far sustained the man physically, mentally, and spiritually without his awareness. God may call the man to a final decision (as for example, the hardening of Pharaoh's heart) by precipitating a crisis or any combination of crises of physical, mental, and spiritual health. At this point, not only does the man fail abysmally in the face of God's Law, but he becomes incapacitated in his attempts to meet the demands of pragmatic results in the secular world, even though such efforts may have been second-nature to him while he was in the first stage

of conversion. Now, not only is he bewilderingly alienated from himself in his inner life, but the earthquake-fault of his crisis runs through the epi-center of his external existence as well. The man can no longer hide his desperation. Finally he may be struck a severe blow directly in the external circumstances of his life in God's attempts to bring him to a repentance that has no reservations; here he is defeated in his attempts to entrench his self-worth within the external structures of his existence.

Many men do not need these crises in order to accept the Word in repentance and obedience, but some do. Liberal and conservative theologians would divide at this point. Barth would, it seems fairly clear, insist on the necessity of the inner crisis. Liberal preachers, on the other hand, would rather draw people's attention to the outer circumstances of their lives to the end that they will conscientiously attend to the inner causes thereto. There is this to be said for this latter approach: there is much in Jesus' teachings to assure us that the happenings in a man's inner life will inevitably make their mark externally at which point men can be called to account with direct confrontation with the facts. When Jesus told men to cleanse the inside of the cup, he was not necessarily speaking to men in religious torment; thus, as it stands, His exhortation carries the

presupposition that a man is capable of doing something about his inner life when confronted by sheer external consequences, without the necessity of a crisis. Let it also be noted, however, that Jesus acknowledged his frustration in his attempts to gather together the children of Jerusalem as "a hen gathers her brood under her wings".¹³⁰ And so, Jerusalem as a whole (a fair sociological sampling) did not repent without a crisis, or even with and subsequent to a crisis. This is a difficult question with many ramifications, but out of it there is clear vindication for the theologians of "crisis". People, on the one hand, who are easily led in their thinking probably receive sufficient crisis when they are called into question in terms of their external circumstances, in which case a clergyman's office is inescapably that of God's representative. People, on the other hand, who are resourcefully sophisticated and self-reliant perhaps must be encountered directly by the Word in terms of their inner existence before their resistance is likely to slacken.

(3) Existence under religious law with the consolation of Grace. This is the state of the man who is both convicted by the Law of God and acquitted by the Grace of God. Because he willingly receives and obeys

¹³⁰Luke 13:34.

the Word, acknowledging both its sustenance and illumination (the two are finally inseparable to faith because the Word illuminates to the believer its sustenance of him), the Word is to him both Law and Grace. The Word makes the Law obeyable, being the fulfillment of the Law.¹³¹ Thus the Word has placed the man in a light wherein he no longer strives to fulfill the abstract, written Law of God, but rather ideally strives to obey the Word in every momentary encounter of his life. Though the man continually falls short of this ideal, and is constantly called to repentance, he is marked in this third stage of conversion by a delight in obedience to the Word because the Word illuminates to him the place of his obedience in God's redemptive, providential action for all mankind.

As we have noted in previous contexts, the Word both empowers and illuminates the believer. In empowering the believer it enables him physically, mentally, and spiritually to do the actual obeying. Part of the man's delight in obedience is the exercise of this power which the Word gives him for obedience, and which he acknowledges to be from God.¹³² That love becomes through obedience to the Word the fulfillment of the Law cannot be systematically inferred here, but must await

¹³¹Matthew 5:17.

¹³²Cf. II Corinthians 4:7.

an analysis of the Word in terms of the meaning of community. For now, it is obvious that the securing of the man's self-worth in the Word frees him for the self-transcending work of loving other people, and the delight of obedience becomes focussed especially in the mutuality of love in all three of the Greek meanings.

The third stage is marked by the man's acceptance of his place within the Process as shown to him by the Word. He does not fear obscurity within the Process because the Word gives him his significance as an individual person in terms of the Process, the Word having overcome the Word-Process paradox. And he becomes shaped de facto by the Word through his life within the Process, while as the Providential goodness of the Process unfolds to him, he gains de facto confirmation of God's steadfastness.¹³³ He does not necessarily shy away from using power (economic, political, charismatic, etc.) because he sees the places of power as means to God's ends.

We now turn to some comparisons of the three stages of conversion and the light which they shed on man's Fallenness. We begin by noting that sin abounds in all three stages. Sin in the third stage occurs as habitually in man as sin in the other two; in the case of sin in the third stage, on the other hand, the man is thrown back

¹³³Cf. Romans 4:20, 8:28.

into stage two where he must bear explicit responsibility for his sin in an immediate encounter with the Word. The predominant characteristic of sin in stage three would seem to differ from that of the sin in stage two, however. Sin in stage three would seem to result generally from the complacency of spiritual pride, whereas sin in stage two would likely have about it a defiant wilfulness. Jesus was notably no less condemnatory toward complacent sin than toward the defiant kind, leaving no room for one's boasting of have arrived at stage three, but rather giving cause for humility that God has provided a stage three to which one may arrive. The severity of stage two can be seen in this regard as a necessary chastening in preparation for the freedom of stage three; conversely, lack of freedom of movement in one's supposed salvation is a serious indication that one is still in two with his supposed salvation being used by him to shield himself from God, or being used as a claim on God.

The defiance of stage two seems to be the end of the sinner's path: here he is either broken, like Nietzsche may have been, or he is converted, as Paul was. In any event, sin cannot get back into the first stage. Once one is awakened to the perils of being a sinner, the sweet sleep of complacent naturalism, like lost innocence, cannot be recaptured, no matter how defiant or subtle the attempt. Some men, having once been initiated

into the mysteries of stage three, but continuing in their wilfull defiance of God in stage two, imagine that they can turn their experience of stage three into a god-like glory over men who are still struggling in the darkness; perhaps God has given them special powers of charismatic leadership which abet them in their demonic cause. The archetypal pattern is given in Milton's Paradise Lost. Like all forms of sin, this one through the Process and the interventions of the Word finds its appropriate end; for a great sinner on the stage of the world can just as easily serve the glory of God as the most humble churchman: such a villain on the grand scale is used by God as a sign for all men of the deadliness and deadness of sin. The great demonic figures of history all serve as examples, for instead of radiating light the shadow which they cast upon their time spreads the darkness of death for all to see. A Cesare Borgia can do incalculable damage, but he does in his way proclaim the futility of sin, even if he is in stage one. How the evil which such a man does is to be balanced out by God's justice and righteousness is admittedly a mystery of faith and a complexity of the classical Problem of Evil. All such evil should be recognized, however, as being made up of the false idolizing of the Process which all men do in lieu of genuine participation in the Process. The event to faith of the Resurrection following the Crucifixion is our

assurance, finally, that God's redemptive plan for men cannot be stopped by evil on any scale. We can understand very little about God's means, but in Jesus Christ, God has made His intentions and the fait accompli of His ends crystal clear.

All of this is not to say that sin in the first stage is not as culpable as sin in the second. The Apostle Paul once and for all indicted sin on natural grounds by implying that even the Romans who knew nothing of Jesus Christ have no excuse; the reason:

Ever since the creation of the world his God's invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse; for although they knew God they did not honor him as God....¹³⁴

Thus, sin is reprehensible in stage one because God is just as accessible to the sinner in stage one as in the other stages; and when the Word in stage two illuminates the existence of the sinner, that existence is the same existence as that which the sinner had in stage one. Indeed, the very defiance of the sinner's reaction to the Word in stage two reflects directly not only his guilt in stage two, but the entrenchedness of this same guilt in stage one as well: thus, the Word first meets the man in stage two according to the man's guilt in stage one.

¹³⁴Romans 1:20, 21, RSV.

Paul's indictment implies that all men are dimly bordering on stage two, and that their indifference toward God is not due to ignorance of God (since to know God is merely to be aware of His presence), but due rather to semi-conscious devices for attempting to rid one's life of God's influence. At no point is man able to live as if in fact God does not exist: to accept God is to be living in the positive consequences of that acceptance, while to reject God is to be living in the negative consequences of that rejection. There is no neutral buffer zone. The decision which all men make here is always a dimly conscious one. The de facto consequences of that decision are always to be reckoned with even in the absence of specific interventions of the Word. One either has received Atonement or one hasn't: one must live from either the one side or the other side of that fact. Paul assures us of the fatefulness of even supposed innocence of one's indifference toward God by the following conclusion to the line of thought of the statement given above:

Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves,,,¹³⁵

God's being present in a self-revealing way to the sinner in stage one removes all basis for honorable indifference

¹³⁵Romans 1:24, RSV.

toward God: in turning from God in stage one man dishonors himself because he turns from his Creator Who loves him. Presumably, a man, if he were willing, could go directly from stage one to stage three, but it is not likely that many men have avoided a considerable stay in stage two. Christians have longed for stage three in their seeming bondage to stage two. Stage two seems to be a necessary concomitant to the fact that salvation is never absolutized while man is living in the Process: there must be a place, God's waiting-room, so to speak, where one has not escaped God's claim while experiencing that "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God".¹³⁶ Though man sins in all three of the stages, only in stage two is he immediately aware that he is a sinner. And though the sinner sleeps, as Wesley put it, in stage one, he is in God's grasp, to be awakened when God so chooses.

Paul, it seems clear, would definitely hold to an understanding of conversion in terms of the three stages of John Wesley (indeed, Wesley's text for those stages was Rom. 8:15). Paul had experienced stage one as a time of indoctrination of Jewish Law.¹³⁷ It was not until later that the Law had taught him to sin.¹³⁸ At

¹³⁶Hebrews 10:31, RSV.

¹³⁷Cf. Acts 22:3.

¹³⁸Romans 7:8, 9.

this second point achievement in the Law became a basis for defiant boasting,¹³⁹ but this ending in emptiness, Paul was driven to measures beyond what the Law required, including the persecutions of the Christians.¹⁴⁰ Not until the third stage is he able to say, "It is not I who live but Christ who lives in me."¹⁴¹ But, even at this point in his life the struggles of stage two are not precluded: "The good I would do I do not; and the bad I would do I do."¹⁴²

Paul's acceptance of the three stages bear on any interpretation we could give to his answer to the rhetorical question, "Shall we sin that Grace may abound?"¹⁴³ If by sinning one could lapse directly from stage three into the supposed easy satisfactions of stage one, only to be lifted painlessly by Grace to stage three again, one would be hardpressed to defend a negative response to Paul's question. But, as Paul's answer to the question in fact indicates, the shattering rigors of stage two make nonsense of such gamesmanship. Here Paul speaks of nothing less than the Christian's having died to sin,¹⁴⁴ and in other connections he raises the significance of this dying to ontological proportions by linking it directly to

¹³⁹Galatians 1:14.

¹⁴⁰Cf. Acts 22:4, 5.

¹⁴¹Galatians 2:20.

¹⁴²Cf. Romans 7:19.

¹⁴³Cf. Romans 6:1.

¹⁴⁴Romans 6:2.

the atoning death of Christ:

...if we have grown into union with him by undergoing a death like his, of course we shall do so by being raised to like like him, for we know that our old self was crucified with him, to do away with our sinful body, so that we might not be enslaved to sin any longer;,,,145

Stage two is as fateful as the River Styx. We are free to stay there, but our freedom to return to stage one is gone. Wesley's three stages are a bulwark against the wishful logic of Antinomianism. Luther's "Sin boldly" thus has an ironic twist in view of Luther's own noteworthy struggle in stage two.

Any Christian theology which views conversion as a life-and-death struggle in one's self-understanding is basically in accord with Wesley's three steps. Horace Bushnell would not have accepted these three steps. It is doubtful that he saw two distinct steps in the growth of the Christian, though he no doubt saw a distinct difference between being a Christian and not being one. Bushnell understandably could not imagine how little children could be expected to live with the dualistic paradoxes which a "crisis" view of conversion would inevitably thrust upon them. He rightly intuited the goodness and continuity of the Process, and saw no problem in enlisting the forces of the Process in the growth which

¹⁴⁵Romans 6:5, 6, Goodspeed.

demonstrably takes place in the lives of Christians. Bushnell's monism thus was complete at the point where Barth is adamant on his dualism. Bushnell could not accept the paradoxes of a "crisis" conversion in a world in which goodness obviously emerges through gradualness and continuity. But, it would be hard for Bushnell to account for, or indeed to affirm at all, the distinctive soteriological necessity of Jesus Christ, over and above His being a historical focus of the goodness which man can also intuit directly in and from God if they will. Barth, on the other hand, has the difficult problem of defending his "crisis" view of man in the face of the axiomatic goodness of God's primordial Creation, including man. Since we adhere to Barth's doctrine of the Word and general view of man, his problem at this point is our problem. For, it is equally difficult for us to explain man's Fallenness in the face of a monistically good, Providentially sustained cosmic development which we have been calling Process. Therefore, we will look with great interest at Barth's handling of his version of the problem.

If God created everything good and foreordained everything to continue to be good, how did man get into his fallen state where he is in need of Jesus Christ? Barth's answer is as follows:

We are told that God considered what he had made,

'and behold, it was very good'. But the goodness and even perfection of creation consists in the fact that God has made it serviceable for the rule of His free and omnipotent grace, for the exercise of the lordship of Jesus Christ.¹⁴⁶

This answer has the following Pauline precedents:

...God has consigned all men to disobedience that he may have mercy upon all.¹⁴⁷

Also,

Law came in, to increase the trespass; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,....¹⁴⁸

Thus, man's Fallenness is under God's eternal authority and sanction. God is, it would appear, responsible for man's condition. Barth is not strictly Calvinistic at this point. God has not foreordained who will be saved and who will not be. For Barth the extent of God's eternal control is merely in foreordaining that salvation would be the central issue of every man, the issue on which each must exercise his freedom of choice. Barth's final rationale for this raising of the issue of salvation within time is "the revelation of the lordship of His Son."¹⁴⁹ Apparently God's eternal authority could be completed within time only by the lordship within time of His Son, time being as He made it. This immanent lordship meets man in terms of the "divine covenant of grace" to

¹⁴⁶Cf. Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics (Edinburgh: Clark, 1936-1958), III/3, 42.

¹⁴⁷Romans 11:32, RSV.

¹⁴⁸Romans 5:20, RSV.

¹⁴⁹Ibid., III/3, 58.

which man must turn in his need in order to be saved.¹⁵⁰ Noteworthy here is that Barth views man as being the way he is for the sake of Jesus Christ, not vica versa; that is, Barth is careful at all times to maintain Christ's pre-existent status regardless of the temptation to make Him immanently subservient to man's needs.¹⁵¹

The missing link in Barth's solution is not readily apparent in the structure of the solution, itself, which seems in itself to be as complete as human speculation is capable of making it. How does man live out this lordship, this covenant, in his daily existence? What is its finite meaning in terms of the daily options of man's life? Here we are thrown back on the Word-man paradox of Barth, which we said in the last chapter is finally overcome in man's daily existence by God's ineffable activity, according to Barth. The difficulty persists, however, because Barth has ontologized man's fallen state. Everything of man is fallen, subject to the threat of "nothingness". What immanent structure of meaning can possibly be erected on that quick-sand? The lordship of Christ, the divine covenant of Grace, even Providence all are ontological motifs in Barth's thought, theological limits so to speak, which do not seem to touch down in man's finite condition. It is well and good to leave to God the solution of the

¹⁵⁰Ibid., III/3, 80.

¹⁵¹Ibid., IV/2, 31.

Word-man paradox, but what does that solution mean to man, what can it say to man in terms of the concrete contrasts of his life? Having begun with an absolute dualism of good and evil, albeit one overcome by God, Barth has no point of departure for immanent distinctions between hope and futility. This was in substance the point of Bonhoeffer's remark, quoted in Chapter 2. And so, Barth can say:

Just because they (Christians) know and proclaim the reconciliation of the world with God, they cannot come to terms with the world.¹⁵²

Paul left the problem where Barth leaves it because of the immanent eschaton in Paul's time. But, something more is needed today than eschatology.

Our answer to the difficulty has been to identify the Word immanently with the Process so that when man accepts the Word, he is able to find his place within the finite structures of the Process, as well. By the same token, man's fallenness is his wilfull rejection of the Process, thus is not derived from the goodness of the Process. This approach has in turn led to the additional difficulties with which it has been the purpose of this dissertation to cope. Whitehead at any rate, has been an indispensable witness that the demonstrable world is something besides Barth's "nothingness".

¹⁵²Ibid., IV/2, 372.

The concrete implications of sin and salvation, dealt with in some degree in our analysis of Wesley's stages of conversion, call for further clarification. From the standpoint of man in his finitude and daily experience it is something of an oversimplification to speak of a Word-Process paradox. The Word-Process paradox: man has one foot in time and the other in eternity. But that paradox prior to being solved by the Word, leads to two sub-paradoxes for man in time. One sub-paradox is only for the natural man in the first stage of conversion. The second sub-paradox, along with a continuation of the first, is for the man encountered by the Word in the second stage of conversion. Each sub-paradox initiates its own dialectic within man's existence. Thus, only at this sub-level does the Word-Process paradox initiate dialectics in man. The reason is that man in his fallenness ignores both the Word and the Process; hence they must come to him by an indirect path. We will characterize these sub-dialectics as follows:

I. The event dialectic is initiated indirectly in man by the Word through the Process and is resolved only by the Word through the Process. It begins with the disappointment that the Process is not as smoothly continuous as natural man would wish. What jars a man into this realization is a sudden stroke of misfortune, an unforeseen contingency within the ongoingness of the Process

which disrupts the oneness of his existence and reveals the gaping abyss beneath. The dialectic which follows is an attempt by the man to reconstruct his personal security and worth within the Process, as it was originally, by attempts to reconcile the continuity of the Process with the contingent irregularities within the Process in such a way that one's personal fulfillment can be foreseen as an eventuality of the Process. Most of man's philosophical thought may be seen to have issued from this event dialectic, which with its tragic overtones has been classically treated as the Problem of Evil. In this dialectic one seeks a principle within the Process itself which is demonstrably stable enough to override any possible contingency and to assure one's safe journey to his destiny. This search may be immanent or transcendent, depending in large part on the disposition toward cynicism behind one's reaction to the misfortune at hand. Before they became covered over with intellectualism and casuistry, every major school of thought among the Greek philosophers can be seen to have flowered from this root. Moreover, such a modern school of thought as Marxism, too, may be the final repository of attempts to reconcile the brutalities of the modern working-man's existence with a secular, immanent apocalyptic hope. We must in any event, however, guard against the notion that contingency itself is evil. Augustine distinguishes between evil that men

do and evil that causes suffering to men.¹⁵³ Presumably Augustine would think of contingency as the form of evil which causes suffering to men. But, contingency need not be thought of as an evil at all. Contingency (unforeseen event), as Whitehead has shown, is an inherent feature of the Process, which is good. Evil is caused, rather, by men's attempts to shield themselves against contingency by idolizing notions of Process that gloss over contingency. Contingency when rightly seen forces man to recognize his need for God.¹⁵⁴

II. The identity dialectic is initiated directly in man by the Word vis-a-vis the Process and is resolved only by the Word through the Process. This is the dialectic of the man in the second stage of conversion, since it is initiated by his being called to decision by the Word. The question now upon the man is, "Who am I, really?" Now we are no longer concerned so much with stark external realities as a more basic problem of inner confusion; here we are probing deeper. In contrast to the event dialectic, which is a search for conservation of oneself by attempting to close up the open wound of one's existence, in the identity dialectic the main concern is

¹⁵³Cf. Augustine, Selected Writings of Saint Augustine, Roger Hazelton, ed. (New York: Meridian Books, 1962), p. 58ff.

¹⁵⁴Cf. Luke 13:1-5.

to find a new bedrock in the midst of a floodtide of change and uncertainty, particularly in one's dealings with other people. Here occurs the basic insecurity of one's inner worth, in toto, caused by the Word in bringing one into the second stage of conversion. The distinctive feature of the identity dialectic is a search for self-worth; regardless of how well the external events of one's life are going, one feels compelled to look past those events for the ultimate worth of one's life. It becomes clear at this point in man's life that no event can of itself answer to man's search for an absolute sanction of himself as man. Barth says this as follows: "...all things and therefore man himself, have their time and are thus limited."¹⁵⁵ Here one's identity is sought dialectically between the two polar axes of one's personal existence, the point where one in fact experiences the focussing of human identity: (1) the man as he is apart from others, and (2) the man as he is with others. It is not obvious why the Word should initiate this dialectic, which is the Word's only dialectic of the second stage of conversion, between these two poles. That the Word does act in this way, in terms of the tensions of human relationships, which have been intensively explored by Dostoevski in Notes From the Underground and by Paul Tillich in The

¹⁵⁵Ibid., IV/2, 462.

Courage To Be, is a sign of its distinctively personal relevance. The Word concretizes itself in this distinctive way consistent with its illumination of the believer's existence in terms of the ultimacy of his relationships with his fellow man. The personalness of the Word is such that its forward edge is in the concrete encounters between people. Here is where the Word moves in the Process: from one person to another. The authority of God is established by the Word in the midst of men's dealings with one another, and from within these relations the Word raises the question of the significance of these relations and their central bearing on all persons involved. This is the point where the whole question of human identity is both raised and resolved by the Word. Hence, the question of human identity does not appear in the form of an isolated doubt, a query to be investigated on the level of pseudo-scientific certitude, but rather is brought into focus dialectically by the Word through concrete concerns among people, through the Word's affirming what is salutary for the people involved, and striking down what is derogatory or subtly demonic for these same people.

We will later have cause to elaborate more fully on the Word in human relationships, but let us note now that we have maintained that the Word has the Process for its content, we must add further at this point in the

Process of man's relationships with his fellow man that content of the Word is intimately related to the means by which the Word comes to man, i.e., via his relationships with his fellow man. (This correlation between means and content of the Word points to a basic characteristic of the Process: nothing in the Process happens with complete irregularity or in complete discontinuity from everything else; that is, contingency is merely a prelude to synthesis into harmony and continuity.¹⁵⁶ If this principle were not true, neither the paradox of event nor the paradox of identity could be resolved and their respective dialectics would be pointless.)

The universality of these two dialectics proves to some extent that they are not pointless. Both seem to be a focal point of an entelechy in man's existence. The identity dialectic many times receives Jesus' sanction in His teachings: "...seek, and you will find;..."¹⁵⁷ "...cleanse the inside of the cup...."¹⁵⁸ "...whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake, he will save it...."¹⁵⁹ "...do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven..."¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶Cf. Whitehead, op. cit., p. 105.

¹⁵⁷Matthew 7:7.

¹⁵⁸Matthew 23:26.

¹⁵⁹Luke 9:24.

¹⁶⁰Luke 10:20.

"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?"¹⁶¹ And so forth. The event dialectic is also affirmed by Jesus, both as the inevitable concomitant of life which it obviously is, and as something which his followers should throw themselves into: "...first be reconciled quickly with your accuser, while you are going to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison; truly, I say to you, you will never get out till you have paid the last penny";¹⁶² "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves";¹⁶³ "...to him who has will more be given, and from him who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away";¹⁶⁴ "...render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's";¹⁶⁵ "...make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon...";¹⁶⁶ More significantly, Jesus taught that one's identity must be settled if one is to survive the catastrophic events which will surely come: "...they have no root in themselves but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the Word, immediately they

¹⁶¹Matthew 5:13.

¹⁶²Matthew 5:24-26.

¹⁶³Matthew 10:16.

¹⁶⁴Luke 8:18.

¹⁶⁵Luke 20:25.

¹⁶⁶Luke 16:9.

fall away";¹⁶⁷ "...seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well";¹⁶⁸ "...the rain fell, and floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it";¹⁶⁹ "...what you are to say will be given to you in that hour";¹⁷⁰ "...because wickedness is multiplied, most men's love will grow cold. But he who endures to the end will be saved"¹⁷¹ When one has solved in the Word the riddle of one's identity, the happenings in one's existence recede in awesomeness.

Conversely, lack of resolution of the identity dialectic in the Word intensifies the event dialectic. For example, if a man who is caught in the second stage of conversion tries to wrench himself loose from the Word and goes off in search of himself in a spasm of self-assertiveness, the result is likely to be a catastrophic disruption of the continuity of his external existence, complete with social and economic repercussions.¹⁷² In turning from the Word, he collides with the Process. On the other hand, if this same man, still rejecting the Word, represses his defiant assertiveness under a veneer

¹⁶⁷Mark 4:17.

¹⁶⁸Matthew 6:33.

¹⁶⁹Matthew 7:27.

¹⁷⁰Matthew 10:19.

¹⁷¹Matthew 24:12, 13.

¹⁷²Cf. Niebuhr, op. cit., p. 188f.

of social amenability, and with the hope of protecting himself from the contingencies and trivialities of the Process, tries to find himself in pseudo-absolute social institutions, his self-worth remains vulnerable to contingent misfortune because he has with discreet ambition turned his identity over to institution. These two attempts at affirming oneself apart from the Word have their archetypes in the Prodigal Son and his brother. In both cases, event becomes instrumental in God's forceably retrieving those who openly or secretly rebel against Him; the "wickedness" of Matthew 24:12 points, however, to a human factor, what may be thought of as the collective aggregate of human sin, the darkness of thought and deed which is present in every human situation and which serves God only by testing a Christian's sincerity.

All man-initiated attempts to solve the identity dialectic, whether individually or collectively, result in the disintegration of identity instead, because in all cases the person becomes further enmeshed in all of the perils and futility of the second stage of conversion. One must find one's identity through the events of the Process, but these events must be illuminated by the Word according to the meaning of one's relationships with his fellow man. On the one hand, unchecked self-assertiveness breaks all bonds between the self and the Process, knows

no rational limits, and drives toward the lurid shadings of paranoid dualism; in negating all that is past, one has nothing to affirm toward the future so he sees the future in strident contrasts and grotesque abstractions. On the other hand, unchecked social amenability too misses the fulfillment of the Process by losing the self in a welter of solicitous attachments to the soft monisms of secular togetherness which serve as absolutized counterfeits for the relativity of the Process. There are such things as amiable initiative and righteous sociability, but only the Word can show us the viable middle-ground where they grow. Only the Word can give man an inimitable combination of inward stability and outward flexibility without which men cannot live.

Because only the Word can resolve the identity dialectic, we are especially appreciative of the warnings implicit in Jesus' teachings to the effect that there is no one stance for man in the Process that is acceptable to God. The disciples' question "Who can be saved?" cannot be answered for man for only with God are all things possible.¹⁷³ "Blessed are the meek....," but is meekness the solution to the identity paradox? Not necessarily, for Jesus commended the centurion,¹⁷⁴ and condemned the saltless salt, that is, the people who had no sense of

¹⁷³ Luke 18:26, 27.

¹⁷⁴ Matthew 8:10.

their individual selfhood, to be trodden under foot of men.¹⁷⁵ In the way we must take hard or easy? There is no dogmatic answer because text proofs can be given for both sides; the way is both hard¹⁷⁶ and easy.¹⁷⁷ Jesus taught that we should smile when we fast.¹⁷⁸ Is fasting the way we should be? Not necessarily, for Jesus Himself "came eating and drinking"¹⁷⁹ and enjoyed the company of publicans at table.¹⁸⁰ Is smiling the way God wants us? Not necessarily, for Jesus promised comfort for those who mourn,¹⁸¹ and He Himself mourned over human tragedy¹⁸² and men's heartedness.¹⁸³ Are we to be anxious? No.¹⁸⁴ Yes.¹⁸⁵ In the story of the rich man and Lazarus, Lazarus the leprous beggar is taken to heaven, while the rich man finds his lot below.¹⁸⁶ Is being a leprous beggar the way to God's mercy? Not necessarily, for a rich man was also given a chance to follow Jesus.¹⁸⁷ Is faithfulness in service the answer? Not necessarily, because the faithful brother of the Prodigal Son ended up disappointed

¹⁷⁵Matthew 5:13.

¹⁷⁶Matthew 7:14.

¹⁷⁷Matthew 11:29.

¹⁷⁸Matthew 6:16.

¹⁷⁹Matthew 11:19.

¹⁸⁰Matthew 9:10.

¹⁸¹Matthew 5:4.

¹⁸²John 11:35.

¹⁸³Mark 3:5, Luke 13:34.

¹⁸⁴Matthew 6:25.

¹⁸⁵Mark 13:9.

¹⁸⁶Luke 16:19ff.

¹⁸⁷Matthew 19:16ff.

and rebellious.¹⁸⁸ The subjectivity of doctrines of the Word may blur this central area of Christian concern, but the objectivity of the Synoptic accounts leaves no doubt that there is no assumed station or pose in life which will assure us of God's approval. There is no acknowledged gift from God, even, which will be to final advantage with Him; for when the Pharisee, praying with the publican in the Temple, boasted of what God had made of him, according to Jesus it was the publican who went home justified.¹⁸⁹ But, even the repentance of the publican means nothing if it is not in what Paul referred to as "Godly grief",¹⁹⁰ that is, devoid of all presumptuous calculation. Those who receive Christ's approbation in the Parable of the Last Judgment are in ignorance of the basis of their deservingness of it, which be it noted, turns out to be based on no stereotype at all, but rather on actions redemptive for their spontaneous relatedness and compassion, which no introspective self-manipulation could hope to achieve.¹⁹¹

Unresolved dialectics in man are destined to flounder in the Process, which is monistic. These dialectics do not start from the Process, but from the Word, and hence receive their resolution only from the

¹⁸⁸Luke 15:11ff.

¹⁸⁹Luke 18:10ff.

¹⁹⁰II Corinthians 7:10.

¹⁹¹Matthew 25:31ff.

Word. The Process, for its part, sifts and separates what stands unreservedly on the Word from what does not, and may be thought of as the narrow gate which Jesus said leads to "life".¹⁹² Redemption takes place only within the Process because only in the Process can men live from the Word which sustains life. Thus, the Word reveals the Process to be inexorably redemptive wherein "in everything God works together for good".¹⁹³ We know objectively that the Process is redemptive for man because Jesus was a man of the Process affirming all things as He found them from the lilies of the field, to a donkey that had not been ridden, to money lent for investment, to the holiness of the Temple and the sacredness of Scripture, to man for whom the Sabbath had been made. Because of Jesus we also know that the Word that encounters us in our daily affairs is redemptive, as well as being the true strength and guide in our daily affairs.

¹⁹²Matthew 7:13, 14.

¹⁹³Romans 8:28, RSV.

CHAPTER IV

WORD AND COMMUNITY

The importance of community for man's life eludes the most perceptive survey of the causalities of the Process. What human community can mean for man cannot be known directly from the Process, even though the communities of man are all part of the Process and are all analyzable in their developmental patterns according to Whitehead's descriptions of the Process as a whole. Only the Word can make known why men must be able to live together in peace and friendship in order to live well. But, the Word does make this known insofar as the Word, as we see it in Jesus Christ, is personal and speaks to man in his personhood. Apart from the Word, the closest that liberal humanism has come to a convincing affirmation of community is to assert the self-evident importance of some form of peaceful coexistence when social crisis occurs. In contrast, the Word makes known to each man who receives it that his existence, and the summation of his life, is made up of his relationships with his neighbors. It seems self-evident that no chain of rational deductions can arrive at this conclusion. Rather, this conclusion is a starting point in Christian thought, given by the Word with such force as to make one ethically bound to it in his dealings with his fellow man.

Thus the soteriological relevance of the Process, as affirmed by the Word, leads systematically to an affirmation of the soteriological relevance of community and the recognition that man, being what he is, concretizes only in community his response to, and participation in, the Process as illuminated by the Word. When man accepts the Word and participates in the Process according to his self-understanding in the Word, that acceptance and participation takes concrete shape and meaning only in community, which is the part of the Process which consists solely of men's dealings with one another. And if man comes to know himself through his interaction with the Process, community is the point in the Process where man comes to understand himself as a person because there his interactions with the Process take the form of interactions with his fellow man. At the same time, the self worth which only the Word can give to man becomes decisively effective in community because in men's dealings with each other self worth is always at bottom the issue, whether covertly or overtly. What man is, what he thinks of himself, and his alienation from himself all become concretized in his relationships with other men, who in the normal relations of life are much like him. What man hopes to make of himself has direct bearing on his relationships with his fellow man because he can only actualize those hopes through these relationships and according to what has

already been actualized to some extent by those to whom he relates. What he is and what he hopes to be comes out in these relationships, but only the Word can give him his true identity, his true starting point as he sets himself forward in community. Nothing, on the other hand, is more effectively creative in community than self-worth which one receives from the Word; nothing is frustrated in community more quickly than self-worth that one posits to oneself, and a guise of humility or self-abandonment only delays the frustration.¹⁹⁴

Here we see why what the Word says is linked directly with how the Word says it: the Word is communicated through language, through men's effects on each other; at the same time, in these same relationships human worth is the fundamental question, a question which is always raised in some way when men come together, but a question which can only be truly answered by the affirmation of human worth given only by the Word. So, the Word enters the Process primarily at the point of human relationships. That is where it functions. That is where men experience its saving power because that is where men discover concretely what they are worth apart from the Word and in the Word.

This whole area is vast and difficult, and we aim

¹⁹⁴ Matthew 23:11, 12.

to get to the bottom of as much of it as possible, but before proceeding further, the question arises, why was it necessary that we deal with Word and Process first and only now deal with Word and community? The answer is that the importance of community is derived only from the Word, whereas the Process is ontologically alongside of the Word, the ontological equal to the Word, and derived from the Word only at the primordial beginnings. We have said that man experiences Word and Process as being distinct. We cannot say that about Word and community. True community is only experienced through the Word, while what passes for community in worldly circles is only make-believe evolving out of man's deep-seated desire for the community which only the Word can give. Men can have true community only through relationships based on the genuine self-worth that is given only by the Word.¹⁹⁵ Hence, there is no way to derive community from the natural causations of the Process, whether by logical construct, or by effect in actual practice. This derivation of community from the Word does not mean, however, that community is not part of the Process. Community is part of the Process and can only be understood subsequent to an exposition of the Process. On the other

¹⁹⁵Cf. Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics (Edinburgh: Clark, 1936-1958), IV/2, 420.

hand, community is a qualified part of the Process, qualified directly by the saving Word.

Community is indigenous to the true Process, but one cannot arrive at community from man's false absolutizations of the Process; and here those false absolutizations meet their decisive defeat. On the other hand, even the true Process cannot generate community; the reason is that the Process (1) itself depends on the primordial creative power of the Word to generate within it whatever takes place within it, (2) is only relative and utilitarian to the Word's development of community for soteriological purposes, and (3) is made up of general patterns of becoming, whereas the becoming that takes place in community is man's becoming, which is always concrete and personal.

Beyond all this, however, the decisive reason for our presenting Word and Process prior to presenting Word and community consists in a human necessity which we will be determinative for us in a number of connections, namely, that man must be willing to participate in the Process in general before he can participate in a community in particular. The problem of personal freedom and destiny, and man's free response to the Word which makes community possible, makes this sequence irreversible. Man must first have accepted the world as he finds it before he can find his place in it. This is a sense in which man's redemp-

tion in Jesus Christ has nothing to do with community,¹⁹⁶ though it cannot be lived out apart from community.¹⁹⁷ For these reasons, Process must be brought out into the open before community can be, even though community is only linked with the true Process through the Word and not at all with the false Processess of man's imagination. The paradoxes of man's relationship to the Process must be established before man's stance toward community can be determined. Conversely, having set forth Process, community must now be dealt with if our soteriology is to have any resolution to it, because only in community can the Process be seen to have any soteriological relevance at all.

Community must come about on a continuum with all developments within the Process according to the precedents which mark the Process as a whole. But, because community is made up specifically of man, it, in addition to being on a continuum with the Process, bears all the marks of the uniqueness of man within the Process. What specifically sets community apart within the Process is man's freedom of response to the Word. The reason for this is that community is directly dependent on the Word.

¹⁹⁶Cf. Mark 1:44, Matthew 6:1-6; 16:17, Luke 18:27, Acts 5:29, I John 2:27.

¹⁹⁷Cf. Matthew 5:24; 10:32, 25:31ff.

Community is not continuous like lower forms of development within the Process. It is always subject to man's new decision to the Word, which in turn points man to community for the fulfillment of his destiny. So, community is not for man a continuous, mindless togetherness. It is always a new coming-together in response to the Word. In community, the Word takes on the guise of the Process without relinquishing any of the contingent freedom of its redemptive thrusts, as set over against the Creative continuities with which it sustains the Process. At the same time, the community differs from the Word in that the community is relative, while the Word is absolute. The reason is that man, himself, is relative while the Word is absolute. Here again community is characterized by that which characterizes man. Community is relative like man, but it is relative in a specific way: it is relative primarily in its being utilitarian to the Word's purpose to save man; and herein lies its link with the absolute, despite its lack of even the continuity which is manifest in the Process as a whole. Because community is not continuous as the Process is continuous, it is open and utilitarian to the absolute Word in a way in which the Process is not. How the absolute Word sustains the relative community is a mystery that is solved by the Incarnation. We have drawn attention to the presence of contingency within the Process.

True community is made up of nothing but contingency, the contingency of human response to the Word, and the Word's contingent encounter with man. Thus, community is always directly dependent on the encounter of the Word for its existence within the Process. The Word as it sustains the Process is the continuous primordial Word of Creation. But Word as it sustains community is always new to man for man's redemption. Ironically, it frequently happens that this contingency of the Word in community undergirds men in times of natural contingency in the Process. In any event, community is that part of the Process which is sustained only by the Word in its redemptive function (as opposed to the primordial function of Creation): following the Fall, community is no longer sustained by the Word of Creation.¹⁹⁸

Whenever community falls away from this ever new confrontation with the Word, preferring more continuous and seemingly more stable structures of meaning, it ceases to be community because it has cast itself out of the Process into the outer darkness of men's false absolutizations of the Process. (Though community is not sustained by the Process, to exist it must be in accord with the developmental patterns of the Process.) The stability thus sought turns out to be instability for the external

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Genesis 3:22-24.

structures of agreement between men cannot take the place of the inner worth which only the Word can provide, and soon men grow jealous of each other in their restless search for the self-affirmation which is now missing. When community must have a reason for being, it has ceased to exist. It then becomes the fictional fruit of lack of uncertainty about meaning which will enable them to cooperate together in concrete concerns and tasks. In true community much is taken for granted and much is held in common between man and man because these men sense that each draws his self-worth from the same source and responds to the same command.¹⁹⁹ Hence, the Word breaks through from one man to another by enabling one man truly to know another; the result is that in community one man supports the destiny of another, rather than threatening it.

Apart from this child-like nonchalance there is no community, just the search for it or the pretense that it has been found. At this juncture the Word is "sharper than a two-edged sword."²⁰⁰ The Word can be seen to govern in the entire history of human affairs by casting assunder men's opportunistic alliances and underwriting men's collective responses to God's command. Most of history is made up of the continuity of man's false absolutizations of the Process. The presence of commu-

¹⁹⁹Cf. Barth, op. cit., IV/2, 421. ²⁰⁰Hebrews 4:12.

nity within history is the eschatological juxtaposition of man's true redemptive hope with man's collective efforts to redeem himself. Community is at the point in the Process where the Word breaks in soteriologically. At that point, it is a sign of the mystery of the Incarnation, namely that men can live according to the Word in harmony despite the contingent character of the Word as it meets them.

In community the Word is spoken en concreto. We finally must arrive at some such concretizing of the Word if the Word is to be seen as meaning anything in human affairs. In its eschatological character the Word breaks into the continuities of man's life and brings an abrupt end to man's absolutizations of those continuities; and the Word breaks into human relationships as a human word²⁰¹ which relativizes all other human words. The Word thus introduces an absolute dimension into human affairs,²⁰² though it does this through the relative channels of those affairs. Though all human language, like man himself, is relative--in that it is relational, for the purpose of clarifying status in relationships--it focusses and projects human confidence and trust: man relates to man by setting himself forward with a self-confidence

²⁰¹Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics (Edinburgh: Clark, 1936-1958), I/1, 192, 231, 276, 306, 500.

²⁰²cf. Ibid., I/1, 70.

which for a given moment is seen as absolute in that it does not seem to depend on the relativity of the relationship itself, and language is his vehicle for doing this. But, the true absoluteness introduced by the Word consists in the Word's power to undercut that self-confidence or sustain it,²⁰³ to give man confidence in fact to speak the truth which is relevant in a given moment, or to undercut man's attempts to secure himself in falsehood by dodging the truth. Here the relevance of the Word is that whereas all human affairs concern what is justified and what isn't, only the Word has the power to justify or withhold justification.²⁰⁴ Thus, the Word illuminates the Process by way of illuminating human relationships in the Process, separating the false from the true, separating community from spurious alliance, separating true self-understanding, which men gain from interpersonal relationships, from false self-understandings. The liar in human affairs, whether he is working consciously or unconsciously, must depend on his ability to generate the confidence of others in what he says, if he is to be successful toward his ends. But once distrust is injected into the minds of his hearers, whether that distrust is based on fact or intuition, the liar's very power to

²⁰³cf. Ibid., I/2, 432.

²⁰⁴cf. Ibid., I/1, 170, 171, III/3, 58ff.

speech is broken; as when Iago is found out in "Othello", leaving him with only this remark: "What you know you know. From this time forth I never will speak word."

The man who fictionizes relationships for his own ends is on borrowed time, because only the Word gives man the confidence to speak, and therefore to generate community.

We must underscore a point touched on a moment ago, namely that the Word enters our interpersonal relationships without the consent of those in the relationship.²⁰⁵ Our freedom to reject the Word is not destroyed, however. We can still reject it, but we cannot control the altering of the relationship in which the Word has occurred. Once the Word has undercut the pretensions of a relationship, we can go on as if nothing has happened, but we are rendered powerless where this relationship has ceased to function and where now its dry-rot has been brought to light. We may reject the interventions of the Word at this point, but only with the most circuitous repressions can we ignore the light which the Word has shed on our existence. The Word does not destroy our freedom to accept or reject it: it illuminates the abyss of our falseness while allowing us to continue to live in that abyss if we so desire. However, once demonic fiction has been exposed, its power

²⁰⁵ Cf. Ibid., I/2, 226.

to captivate is broken. This eschatological doing away with the old and opening the way toward the new is how the Word initiates the second stage of conversion and the identity dialectic.

Thus, through the Word's power to tear down and build up human self-confidence, to vivify guilt and to press man toward true self-actualization,²⁰⁶ it generates community based on honesty, honor, and genuine vitality. The purpose of this generation, apparently, is to enable man to gain a true understanding of himself and through acceptance of the Word become reconciled to himself in that true self-understanding. Man is the only creature within the Process that can be reconciled to himself only by direct intervention of the Word. In this connection, the purpose of the Process, where man is concerned, is to facilitate man's self-understanding and reconciliation to that self-understanding. What the Word, for its part, has given to man, i.e., what is real in man, is made known by the Word in the man's relationships with his fellow man, while at the same time the Word casts away into the fire that which is contrived and spurious in man.²⁰⁷ These revelations, in turn, approximate to man's eternal worth, the discovery and enactment which it is the

²⁰⁶ Ibid., IV/2, 368ff; 374.

²⁰⁷ cf. John 15:1ff.

purpose of man's life to make. Man's reconciliation to himself in community, and the corresponding actualization of his eternal worth and identity, seem to be a necessary condition for his receiving that eternal worth and identity: we must already have received and habitually used to some extent what we are destined to receive in full; else, we are not yet destined to receive it. Such is born out by the Incarnation's validation of human life in the Process. In addition, Paul speaks along the same line:

...we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.²⁰⁸

All of man's existence seems to be aimed at this reconciliation with one's true self, and the Word comes on the human scene as the missing keystone.²⁰⁹ But, this reconciliation is both the basis and the reward for its existential counterpart, namely, the act of forgiveness by man between man and man.²¹⁰ Apart from this act of forgiveness the reconciliation of the Word cannot be actualized, and community is not possible or justifiable on intellectual grounds, though alliances between man and man may have a perfunctory, pragmatic validity apart from

²⁰⁸Romans 8:23 RSV.

²⁰⁹E.g., Barth, op. cit., IV/2, 396.

²¹⁰Matthew 6:14; Cf. Mark 4:12.

the Word. Looking back on earlier lines of thought in this dissertation, we witness to the fact that man's acceptance of the Process has its meaning not only in his acceptance of his place within the Process, which the Word shows to be community, but also in his willingness to see, and to be reconciled to, both himself and his neighbor as both are objectified in community by the Word.

The ridge-pole of the last chapter was the observation that man's fallenness places him in a paradoxical confrontation with both the Process and the Word. The results were, respectively, the event dialectic and the identity dialectic, both of which are resolved by the Word. All of this may be summed up by the basic notion that the Word is the only cure for man's fallenness. In our present discussion of Word and community, we are in a position now to carry forward our analysis of man's fallenness and the Word's redemption, by showing how the Word cures man's fallenness through community. We must first contrast man's fallenness with community in order to avoid mistaking the former for the latter.

Regardless of how deeply man is involved in false self-absolutizations and outright immorality, he is dimly aware that community, for all of its relativity, is his only pathway toward fulfillment, since it is obvious even to natural man that only in community can the final

futility of interpersonal alienation be overcome. Man's failure, however, to enter into community in any fulfilling way becomes an unambiguous indictment of his fallenness, manifested as it is as false self-absolutizations which resist the relativity of community. On the one hand, as we asserted in the previous chapter, the completeness of man's fallenness is obscured when seen against the Process; and the completeness of man's fallenness is obscured when seen against community for the same reasons, since community is part of the Process; moreover, man's fallenness becomes concretized vis-a-vis community, viz., man's failure to enter community. On the other hand, man's failure to enter community becomes the final, undeniable frustration of his fallenness, which can only be lived down by means of concentrated efforts at repression.

It would appear that there are two requirements for one's being able to enter into community: (1) one's self-worth must be secure in the Word so that community is not seen as a threat to that self-worth; and (2) one must have accepted, and be functionally objectified in, the Process so as to be knowable to those receiving one into community. Both of these requirements are met only by gifts provided by the Word, whether or not the Word is acknowledged by the receiver as their source. With regard to the second requirement traces can be found

in Whitehead's writings lending weight to the conclusion that one must be crystalized within oneself to a certain extent before life in relationship is possible, before participants in a relationship can "prehend" each other.²¹¹ Thus, the Word-Process paradox, initiating the event and identity dialectics, precedes the problem of entering into community. As we pointed out above, one's redemption in Jesus Christ is not necessarily contingent on developments within community; furthermore, any attempt to tie redemption to concrete results in one's life in community can but lead to a doctrine of works righteousness.

Man hides his failure to enter into community by building pseudo-communities of two types: (1) immanent pseudo-communities consisting of relationships based on what is thought to be the Process apart from the Word; and (2) transcendent pseudo-communities consisting of relationships based on what is thought to be the Word apart from the Process. Man's fallenness thus splits into these two types of pseudo-community, or contrived solutions to the paradoxes of his existence, as the result of his participation in both time and eternity and his inability to synthesize the two apart from the Word. The first type of pseudo-community accentuates

²¹¹E.G., Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), p. 28.

developments which are seen as concrete within time, while the second type accentuates structures of meaning which are seen as absolute and eternal. The first type offers tangibility in all things generally with sensuality as the main concern. The second type offers prospects of impregnability, spirituality, and status as the communal bonds. The first type fails to become community because, arising out of the first stage of conversion, it is devoid of interpersonal trust based on experience of the Word and of the Word's illumination of man in the Process, of the Word's affirmation of the person apart from all interpersonal relationships. The second type fails to become community because, arising out of the second stage of conversion, it is devoid of interpersonal trust based on acceptance of the Word and the reconciliation of man to himself through the Word; instead, the self absolutizes itself in terms of the Word, and so denies the relativity of the Process; hence, persons in the second type of pseudo-community fail to communicate because they lack objectification to each other through the Process.

I. Immanent pseudo-community. This is the pseudo-community of man in the first stage of conversion. It serves as the collective effort at the event dialectic. The permanence of the demonstrable structures of the Process is tacitly assumed. These structures would primarily be business and home, with larger political struc-

tures in the background. Interpersonal relationships are oriented toward demonstrable effects within these structures, in which the effects are viewed as ends in themselves, and participants in these relationships accordingly have only pragmatic value to each other. At the top of the value structure, the goal and impetus of all activity, and the purpose toward which even the business and home structures are utilitarian is, as Freud discovered, sexual fulfillment, or rather sexual affirmation of one's personal worth. Otherwise, personal worth does not enter into this pseudo-community because within this pseudo-community personal worth is not called into question by the Word. On the other hand, trust is lacking between people and concerted efforts seldom succeed on a long-range basis. This failure of inner trust between persons is the failure of this pseudo-community to be true community. However, this failure is partially obscured by the lure of sexual freedom in a community-free environment; conversely, failures of trust induce a further exclusivistic emphasis on sexual consummation in that this consummation now becomes devoid of all existential contexts. The final orientation is toward freedom of self-expression through the power of unprecedented event, seen as self-affirming for its unprecedentedness, devoid of all structured ramifications or sequences and culminating in the self-affirmingness of the sex act.

This final orientation toward unprecedented event, however, fails to solve the event dialectic, and therefore the pseudo-community fails in terms of its original purpose of solving the event dialectic; if existence is reduced to a random chain of events, there is no security from contingency. As yet, contingency is only dimly felt as a threat to the self (the explicit realization of this threat comes only with an actual contingency in one's existence); however, contingency is always felt as a threat to the prospects of sexual consummation. The only answer to this failure lies in the self's control of events for its own purposes; and so the self becomes an entity of immanent power for furthering of itself toward sexual fulfillment. One tries to get on top of the contingencies of one's existence. Whether this can be done more effectively through individual or collective efforts remains as a major ambiguity of this whole approach to the paradoxes of man's existence, for certainly collective power is not immune to interpersonal jealousies springing from the very sex drives which such collective power was originally formed to serve, and individual efforts toward sexual consummation soon wither without some sort of viable context in which preparatory relationships could develop. Sexual frustration thus inevitably leads to assertions of immanent power by one man over others.

II. Transcendent pseudo-community. This is the pseudo-community of man in the second stage of conversion. It serves as the collective effort at both the event and identity dialectics. Here self-worth is explicitly called into question by the Word, and the purpose of the transcendent pseudo-community is to facilitate reestablishment of that self-worth. For that purpose the artifacts of the Process, including sexual consummation, are seen as useless: nothing less than Process-transcending structures of meaning will do since the Word, which has triggered the second stage of conversion, has called all artifacts of the Process into question. Transcendent pseudo-communities are, therefore, cliques in a world viewed in terms of meaningless ignominy. Hence, the failures of this pseudo-community to be real community is obscured by the transcendent pseudo-worth conferred on the individual, just as sex was the compensation for failure of the immanent pseudo-community to be community. In the transcendent pseudo-community sex is always something of an auxiliary drive, however. Nevertheless, the drive for status is always in some tension with the sex drive due to man's inability to synthesize the eternity and time which stand behind them respectively. Sex is repressed not only for appearance's sake, but out of fear of being imprisoned in the relativities of the Process because of sex. This banning of sex, even within the

sincere desires of the individual, stems from a basic lack of reconciliation of man to himself through the Word. Sexual perversions are almost the inevitable result.

The final orientation is toward the power of any symbol, often personified in one man, which is able plausibly to elevate the existence and worth of the individual above all that is relative, meaningless, and contingent. Thus, whereas the immanent pseudo-community veers toward the immediacy and self-affirmingness of immanent power, the transcendent pseudo-community veers away from all that is immediately self-affirming and toward ordered and predictable self-manifestation of the individual within a structured context that is seen as converging toward eternity: that which is self-affirming is external to the self in such a way as to transcend the self and to be seen as worthy of the sacrifice of the self. Immanent forms of power are taken as mere adjuncts to, and implementors of, the transcendent structure of meaning and the drive toward the status therein.

The built-in break-down in the transcendent pseudo-community, corresponding to the self-defeating sexual jealousies of the immanent pseudo-community, would be rivalries for status. Even sexual impulses may be overridden in an effort to gain and keep strategic advantages in the struggle for status. Contrary to Freud, the censoriousness of one's neighbors is not the primary cause

of sexual sublimations since such censoriousness plays hardly a role at all in the anonymity of modern urban life where status images, however, command almost exclusive sway. As we have noted previously, the Word undermines contrived trust and alliances between individuals based on status; contingent sexual frustration is the corresponding defect of the immanent pseudo-community. Break-down of trust is, however, always incipient in the lack of objectification through the Process of individuals in the transcendent pseudo-community, and rivalries for status are inevitable signs that such a break-down in inter-personal trust has occurred.

Both types of pseudo-community received the condemnation of the Apostle Paul. The immanent pseudo-community he deplored as desires of the flesh that war against the spirit.²¹² The transcendent pseudo-community he deplored because as the foolishness of the world it leads to self-deception²¹³ which puffs up, as opposed to love which builds up.²¹⁴

Man's need for community is so deeply felt and so vexed by failure that his self-absolutizations are often couched in terms of whatever native gifts man has toward community. For example, if he easily objectifies himself

²¹²Galatians 5:17.

²¹³Galatians 6:3.

²¹⁴I Corinthians 8:1.

through the Process, he may absolutize himself in terms of these self-objectifications. If, on the other hand, he has a feel for transcendent structures of meaning and is able to communicate these structures so as to strike chords in other people, this gift of power may become hitched to the burden of self-absolutization. It must always be remembered that all that man is and has is from the Word. Also, man's universal tendency toward self-absolutization is against the Word. Hence, when gifts which facilitate community are sidetracked from the Word to absolutization of the self, they are detached from their source in the Word and become powerless replicas of what their fulfillment would have been in service to the Word. Gifts that are not used properly soon lose their physical, mental, and spiritual vitality. More importantly, the self, now absolutized in terms of the gifts, dies when the gifts die. Normally, in service to the Word, the gifts from the Word become windows to the self that possesses them. In this way the gifts put that self on display to the community for the purpose of focussing selfhood for the community. But, when the gifts are taken over by the self for the purpose of displaying itself before the community, the gifts lose their transparency to the self, which is now self-absolutized through them; and hence they are no longer a redemptive aid to community, but rather have become an opaque, alien,

demonic force in opposition to the redemptiveness of the community. Whenever any gift provided by the Word is taken captive by the self for the purpose of putting the self on display, regardless of the pretenses of such display, the gift is disowned by the Word, and the gift no longer has power to redeem selfhood.

The self is nothing more than a repository of the honor conferred on man by the Word. Honor from the Word is what the self is made of. This honor accumulates through the self's continually giving itself in service to the Word. There is continuity of this accumulation, but this continuity is subject to the contingent freedom of the self's decision to the Word anew. Should this continuity of the Word's honor prompt the self to decide against the Word in favor of its own absolutization, that honor shrivels to a vestigial remnant, and the self's absolute claims are entirely without basis in fact or fantasy. The meaning of what the Word provides cannot be understood apart from the community toward which the Word is directed, and when the receiver of the Word's gifts absolutizes himself in terms of the gifts, he ceases being able to understand himself, and function, as a person vis-a-vis the community; this disappearance of personhood is soon caught by the community, which can then but disgorge him in spirit if not in fact.

In the immanent pseudo-community there is a signal

lack of desire in the individual for power over the other members beyond the direct avenues to the sex act since sexual fulfillment, seen as the summum bonum of the immanent pseudo-community, is seen to depend on a general atmosphere of loose congeniality, compatibility, and cooperation among members, ironically to the point of sexual impotence sometimes. Only secondarily, when the self is called into question by the Word and thrust into the second stage of conversion, is sexual desire transmuted into domineering assertions of power over other selves for the sake of domination alone. This calling of the self into question by the Word in the immanent pseudo-community as we anticipated in the previous chapter, may be either through external contingency, usually resulting in sexual frustration and initiating the event dialectic, or by internal encounters with the Word, initiating the second stage of conversion and the identity dialectic. In either case available immanent forms of power and vitality are taken as the vehicles for the domination of other selves, because the self's drive toward sexual fulfillment, derived as it is from these immanent vitalities, has now locked the self into the functional reflexes of those immanent vitalities: in other words, immanent vitalities which become idolized through sexual self-assertions expand when the self is called into question by the Word.

Immanent forms of power over people are generally

not reverted to, however, by a self that is called into question by the Word while it is in the transcendent pseudo-community. All selves in the transcendent pseudo-community feel called into question by the Word, but only some of these selves fail to find sustenance in the symbolic fictions of the pseudo-community. These latter selves do not revert to immanent power forms because so far as this pseudo-community as a whole is concerned the Word has already called into question all immanent artifacts, vitalities, and forms of power as being trivial and having nothing to do with the search for self-worth. The form of power taken to dominate other selves in this case is the power of the symbols of the pseudo-community to absolutize selfhood; in this case, however, these symbols become instruments toward the degrading of self-absolutizations of other member of the pseudo-community to the extent that any symbol is a two-edged sword for both elevating and degrading absolutizations of the self. Jesus referred to this transcendent self-assertiveness as the power to kill the spirit, rather than merely the body.²¹⁵

Whether the self expands and draws the attention of the pseudo-community through immanent vitalities or transcendent symbols, the final result is in essence the

²¹⁵Matthew 10:28.

same. By way of immanent vitalities, the self asserts itself above and over-against every symbol and makes of itself a symbol to the immanent pseudo-community. By way of transcendent symbols, the self appropriates to itself the reverence which the transcendent pseudo-community pays to certain symbols by pretending to espouse those symbols and by becoming through the gifts of the Word a convincing embodiment of those symbols. In both cases the self acknowledges its guilt by knowingly resisting being manifested to other selves according to contrived intentions. In both cases a man turns himself into a symbol to a pseudo-community and is welcomed and applauded as such because all pseudo-communities seek to personify that which holds them in its spell. The immanent pseudo-community seeks a vital, immanently responsive personification, while the transcendent pseudo-community seeks an alabaster-perfect, transcendently pure personification. The first path ends in depersonalized bestiality. The second path ends in depersonalized ossification. Neither has true honor, only charming illusions of honor. True honor is an inimitable combination of immanent and transcendent elements and cannot be stereotyped solely along immanent or transcendent lines, for in true honor the Word overcomes the Word-Process dichotomy. The life which comes from the Word as vitality, honor, and personhood, therefore, cannot be symbolized, but rather remains

obscure even to true community, emerging only gradually through "signs and wonders"²¹⁶ for those who are gifted to perceive them.

Community is an eschatological possibility. Like Grand Central Station, it is a crossroads, the point where destinies intersect, where transactions of larger matters are brought out into the open, the point of decision, the point of encounter, the point of departure, the point of culmination. In various and other ways community is eschatological because of its character of never-to-be-repeated event. It always occurs at the outer limits of man's existence, as something toward which men vaguely strive but only attain with God's decisive intervention, for it always comes off unexpectedly despite all of man's preparation. Community, therefore, is a sign that God acts in the present on man's behalf at the point of man's futile loneliness. In community, and only in community, man becomes an end in himself, the end of God's redeeming work, and therefore something which man could never make of himself on his own. Here what is God's takes place in the depths of man's lostness. How that takes place, what that secret bond is that comes alive between man and man, is only for the Word to reveal, and only those who have found themselves through that bond know how important

²¹⁶ II Corinthians 12:12.

community is.

One can only enter community with the aid of the Word that meets man on his own ground. The Word, itself, has its origin outside of community: "...The Word became flesh and dwelt among us...."²¹⁷ On the other hand, this statement from John has no meaning for me unless I identify myself with the "us", with the ones at whom the Word is directed. But how can I identify myself with the "us" unless my self-worth has already been secured by the Word? Seen from the outside, community is a whim, an unjustifiable triviality. But, so is the Word unjustifiable: the Word comes into the arena of man's pretensions as the unjustifiable justification and shares in the scandal, the absurdity of community. The Source of all justification can be nothing but offense to man's pretensions to justification, and community, the scene where the Word's justifying of man takes place, can be no less of an offense.

What other definition of community can there be, in view of the unlikelihood of community, than that it is the coming together of men who are obeying Christ's shattering command, "Follow Thou Me"?²¹⁸ Can community be understood as anything less than discipleship? For attached to the "Follow me" of Matthew 4:19 is an affir-

²¹⁷John 1:14.

²¹⁸cf. Barth. op. cit., IV/2, 533ff.

mation of purpose, of mission, of the destiny of discipleship, namely, "...and I will make you fishers of men."

Here we find something that looms up beyond community and dwarfs it, while giving community its bearings, for Jesus in the very act of forming the first Christian community directs the members of that community toward those outside of the community. From this we can but conclude that community is merely a point on a line, one of the lines of force of God's reaching toward all men. Community as discipleship means that community is only an incidental factor in one's service to God, perhaps a reward and a comfort in that service²¹⁹ but nevertheless an incidental factor.²²⁰ Obviously, community alone does not contain human destiny, but rather serves as a pointer toward human destiny, and perhaps acts as a vehicle toward it. But, as Barth points out, whatever else may be said about community, community is never more than provisional.²²¹ Here the mystery of community must be viewed with a backward and forward glance, for here is involved the realization that in as much as God has reached us, we are enabled to

²¹⁹Cf. Romans 1:12.

²²⁰Cf. Karl Barth, Community, Church and State (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1960), p. 166; Karl Barth, Evangelical Theology: An Introduction (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1964), p. 31; also Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, IV/2, 620.

²²¹Barth, Church Dogmatics, IV/2, 620f.

reach others, whether they are in community or not.

Community seems to be nothing more than a waystation on that road. For all of its resemblance to the programmatic gradualness of the Process, community is ad hoc, an event that points to more than an event, viz., an event that has the once-for-allness of a miraculous sign of the new beginnings of Christ's dominion. Thus, community is as unlikely and absurd as obedience to Jesus Christ, as a positive response to His "Follow me", and cannot be understood except through one's willingness to overcome the offensiveness of this call to obedience, and cannot be entered into except by way of obedience to this call. At this point the Barthian Wholly Other is real. And this obedience refers itself only to the Word of Jesus Christ, never to presuppositions about, or contrived intentions toward, what is conceived to be community: it is not the programmatic "I will make you fishers of men" that calls together community, but rather the "Follow me" preceding it. Whenever community itself is sought as a justification or singled out hopefully as a distinct entity, that which is envisioned and found can only be pseudo-community pretending to be community but lacking the One Who says "Follow me". The "Follow me" says nothing about community. The One Who says it is by saying it referring men to Himself, not to community. What the disciples had together was not the consciousness of coming together to be to-

gether, but rather the coming together of men being given a series of briefings in preparation for team efforts. In short, the attention is always centered on Jesus Christ and His larger work. Therein lies the difference made by the statement, "...where two or three are gathered in my name...",²²² as well as Paul's reference to "one body in Christ!"²²³ We have to take community as Jesus Christ gives it to us, or be content to lose all trace of it.

²²²Matthew 18:20.

²²³Romans 12:5.

CHAPTER V

WORD AND PROCLAMATION

What kind of assertion is a proclamation of the Word? It is an assertion in which something is brought to men's attention that is beyond the circle of power of man to affirm or deny. When the Word is proclaimed a disturbing element enters man's mind, disturbing for its incontrovertibility, disturbing for its uncommon familiarity, for its alien kinship with man's essence. Anselm's proof of the existence of God, far from being a proof in the modern, inductive sense, was a phenomenology of the proclamation of the Word for if man can think of an ultimate being, man is ultimately powerless to not think of an ultimate being; and despite all that sceptics may imply, that a notion of God is conceivable to man points irrevocably to the insolubility of the bond that is between man and God. In this respect, the proclaimed Word is limited in that it can bring to man's mind only what is there already as an impressionistic outline or Jungian archetype. On the other hand, such limits set upon the proclaimed Word from beyond it become the strength and self-evident undeniability of the proclaimed Word. For where the outer limits of man are brought into focus in a self-authenticating, undeniable way, man can but halt in awe or stupor or rage, as if at the sound of a gun-shot in

the wilderness, for he has no standing ground for any equally undeniable counter-assertion which could reconstruct his world or erase without a trace where these outer limits have made their mark. A lawyer does not argue that an obvious accident has not occurred. Rather, the only procedure left for him is to establish the facts surrounding the accident, as well as any extenuating circumstances that may be involved. Human dialogue is powerless to shield man from the implications of the proclaimed Word, for God meets man at the outer reaches of his life through the proclaimed Word in a way that is undeniable and independent of all other premises for human thought. Once God has impinged Himself on the sphere of man's power and activity, and thus relativized that sphere,²²⁴ there is no going back, there is no realistic basis for the pretense that what has happened has not happened. And though life may seem to go on as usual, with no outward change in the mundane human dialogue, such usualness in the face of ultimate crisis betrays its own irrelevance to the true human situation. Thus, man's attempts to live atheistically are only a lack of preparation for God's coming, which as a result can only overtake man by surprise and bewilderment.

²²⁴Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics (Edinburgh: Clark, 1936-1958), IV/2, 530.

For purposes of clarification, we must recognize at the outset that proclamation of the Word is a qualified form of the Word, a concretizing of the Word. The proclaimed Word must be recognized as being explicitly a human word²²⁵ in a special context, out of a special impulse, with a special implication; though such specialness may not always be immediately apparent in its fulness to man. Like all human words, the proclaimed Word is spoken, at least by implication, vis-a-vis community. On the other hand, all that we have previously asserted about the Word is true of the proclaimed Word within this restriction that the proclaimed Word's dominant bearing is on community. The proclaimed Word, being vis-a-vis community, becomes the event in which community comes to itself as community according to the developments outlined in the last chapter, to the end that man comes to himself as a person within community. As a human word among human words, the proclaimed Word differs from its verbal environment primarily in that it is God's Word and not man's: it is on and from the side of God and not on and from the side of men,²²⁶ and it is centered in God's concerns and intentions prior to becoming centered in man's. In addition, the proclaimed Word differs from its

²²⁵Ibid., I/1, 57.

²²⁶cf. Matthew 16:23.

verbal environment secondarily in that it is not brought up by one thing leading to another in the human dialogue: at this point its wholly otherness becomes de facto. Neither is there any chain of human logic that leads to the proclaimed Word as a necessary conclusion so far as the developments of the Process are concerned although the proclaimed Word turns out to be profoundly relevant to life amid the developments of the Process when the Process is illuminated by the Word. There is thus a seeming irrelevancy about the proclaimed Word that threatens the relevancy of all that is thought to be relevant. To man, proclamation of the Word just happens. But, it happens in such a way as to demand a reckoning. That the proclaimed Word is of itself able to create a new center of relevance is a sign of the power of the Incarnation.

Apart from this self-affirmingness of the proclaimed Word, there is an enigmatic character about the time-slot allotted for the sermon in the worship service. There scripture becomes an explicit point of departure for the proclaimed Word, though nothing in the worship service serves as a guarantee that scripture will become at a given moment the point of departure for the proclaimed Word. No dogmatic framework, whether "conservative" or "liberal", sacramentalist or Biblicist, no set of conceptual antecedents whatever, can satisfactorily authenticate itself as the vessel for the proclaimed Word; just

as there is no guarantee but that of Christ that the eucharistic elements are at all efficacious.

In the proclamation of the Word the honor of God in Jesus Christ is introduced into the human stream of consciousness. In Barth's words,

God as the Judge establishes that He is right against this man, thus ²²⁷creating a new right for this man before Him,....

Thus, Paul first broaches the Gospel in Romans not in terms of its specifically conciliatory content, or even by way of any sort of christological preparation, but simply as "the righteousness of God"²²⁸ and as "the power of God for salvation"²²⁹ take it or leave it! Here Paul lays an unabashedly Old Testament foundation for the Gospel with the Jewish Law in the early chapters of Romans, and not until v. 3:22 is Jesus Christ significantly mentioned at all, and there still under the emphatic assertion of God's righteousness. Not until much later are the comforts of Grace announced. Here we see outlined the iron hull of Gospel proclamation: the "hard", almost defiant announcement precedes the softer, more conciliatory tones by such a great distance that the two sides of the Gospel seem at first glance in Romans to be contextually unrelated. Paul demonstrates a definitive

²²⁷Barth, op. cit., IV/2, 503.

²²⁸Romans 1:17.

²²⁹Romans 1:16.

awareness that men cannot be led to believe in God's benevolence toward them until they have submitted themselves wholly to God's honor and righteousness over and above their own pretensions to self-salvation. And need we belabor the point that all of Barthian theology seems to be a footnote to this Pauline method of Gospel presentation?

On the other hand, man needs to know, behind the immediacy of his interpersonal relationships, that everything is all right, especially once he as man has become aware of the frailty of these relationships so far as his individual survival and fulfillment are concerned; else, these relationships become disrupted and rendered fruitless and useless in themselves by man's distracted gropings after the missing absolute. Far from being an importunate agitation, the proclaimed Word leads, once it is accepted, straight to peace and joy wherein the open wound of man's self-conscious frailty is closed up. When the Word is proclaimed, God's assertiveness is seen to suffice and man's awkward and inconsequential thrashings fall to rest. What happens when the Word is proclaimed is a recapitulation of the "God said" of Genesis 1 in which man is once again set on solid ground in the midst of the waters. The unanswerable from God is made the center of attention, and a new chain of logic and sequence of events is started with their own frame of meaning. The old passes out. The

new comes forward. The way for man into the Process is opened. Man, the creature of care, becomes the creature of peace, at liberty to be himself within time.

First, then, in the proclamation of the Word comes the shock of God's honor. Secondly comes the assurance in Jesus Christ, that God in His honor honors man for himself.

In the second and final phase of proclamation all dialectical antitheses are overcome and a synthesis announced; the peculiarity of this second phase of the proclamation of the Word is that in this phase there is an announcement of what has in fact been accomplished beforehand by the Word, that despite all appearances to the contrary, all dialectical antitheses of man's existence have in fact been resolved by a man, the man Jesus Christ. This overcoming of all dialectical tension in man's existence is signalled ever anew by the recurring power of the Incarnation, which to this end continually heals the fragmentedness and absurdity of man's past and present, and by this efficaciousness assures man of an unbreakable forward link to eternity. And the only available answer to the Word for man is commitment of himself, that is, the owning of himself up to his origin and destiny toward which the proclaimed Word points and which the present power of the Incarnation validates. And when the Word has been proclaimed there is nothing for man to say on its behalf, no way for man to commend it, apart from

his willingness to go forward from it on the basis of it.²³⁰ Man's self-confidence is healed, and he can live in selfless freedom, when he discovers that the power of the Incarnation, is one with the visible evidences of power within the Process. And so far as man is concerned, it is not far-fetched to surmise that, like the Incarnation itself, the entire purpose of the Process is to afford empirical assurance of the efficacy of God's power to assist man toward fulfillment and salvation, though the sacramental character of the universe is only apparent from a sacramentalist reference point. The Process, in any event, becomes the epistemological blackboard on which the Word becomes witnessable to man, on which the event of the proclaimed Word merges with the continuity of redemptive development.

The proclaimer of the Word, then, is a man who is the product of that which he proclaims: he is a man of peace among men of care.²³¹ Alongside of his peace, man's scheming toward sexual conquest and the striving after status, the worry and anger which men put on to impress the world or carry for real, all seem as non-answers to man's problem of finding identity and oneness with himself. The proclaimer of the Word is peculiar in that he makes no

²³⁰Ibid., IV/2, 319.

²³¹cf. John 14:27; Matthew 10:13.

attempt to justify himself before men: he is before men because God has opened the way for his being there. Therefore, this proclaimer is instantly held suspect and may be made the object of shaming, having put man's schemings and strivings to shame. As the man of peace, the proclaimer of the Word is transparent to the peace that is in him. All other proclaimers in proclaiming themselves proclaim cause for dark unrest and uncertainty, sometimes by the clever devices of disturbing men's vulnerable naivete and by lording it over men by means of the pseudo-wisdom of sophistication and introspection. By contrast, the proclaimer of the Word sets men on the rock of Creation; he proves to be a man of peace who paradoxically is concerned for his hearers, a feat accomplishable only in the power of the Incarnation. In his not caring for himself, his cares prove to be enlightened cares in contrast to the confusion-wrought cares of the world.²³²

The possibility of the proclaimed Word, then, is the possibility that men can be radically influenced by a human word. Is this latter possibility more than a mere illusion? Can men radically be influenced in their self-understanding by a human word? This is the whole question surrounding the mystery of the proclaimed Word. This

²³²Luke 1:51.

question ought not to be answered too glibly in the affirmative, for when it happens that the Word does concretize itself as a human word we are brought face to face with the power of God; no mystery has been solved, but one has been opened up instead. As Barth says,

Real proclamation of the Word of God cannot be limited by our intention to speak the Word of God.²³³

The reason for this is very simple. An assurance of God's gracious intention toward us cannot be formulated literally. What might such a literary formula be, if there is one? The proclaimer cannot put God's Word into his own mouth. Nor can he decide to put it down on paper for later consumption. Grace cannot be put on ice. Thus, for Paul no one can even utter the words "Jesus is Lord" without the momentary help of the Holy Spirit,²³⁴ and apart from the tradition behind Phil. 2:11. From this self-evident truth, we gather that the proclamation of the Word is, so far as the proclaimer and his hearers are concerned, an unintended act, something very closely akin to any ordinary accident, but an accident that is an unexplained miracle. There is in this unintended act only one condition for it to be a proclamation of the Word, namely, that in the moment when the Word is being proclaimed, the proclaimer must know what he is talking

²³³Barth, op. cit., I/1, 58. ²³⁴I Corinthians 12:3.

about: he must know with his whole being, his being made whole by the Word, that the word he speaks is the Word. If the Word has founded his being, it will through him have the power to found the beings of his hearers. There is no way to describe how this founding takes place in terms of analogies drawn from developments witnessed in the Process, for here we are referring to that which makes all developments within the Process witnessable in terms of their Word-centered continuity.

As an event, the Word, it must be allowed, can occur on all levels and segments for human societies, though not without some willingness of the persons involved to relate to each other in some intelligible fashion. The Word as a power in persons, above and beyond explicit proclamations, in other words, can take shape in unlimited ways between persons. But, the possibilities of the proclaimed Word are sharply restricted. Barth restricts all proclamations of the Word to scripture-based utterances within the Christian community (see p. 33 of this dissertation). Here we must concur with Barth, for we see the proclamation of the Word as happening loosely according to the patterns established by church dogmatics. What those patterns are effects the event of proclamation itself only secondarily. The important point is that proclamation of the Word depends directly on whatever scriptural tradition may be present within the community to which the proclamation is

being made at the moment it is being made. The distinctiveness of community and the proclaimed Word go hand in glove. Community exists only out of the proclaimed Word. The proclaimed Word, on the other hand, can only be to the community that has been prepared for proclamations of the Word by past proclamations of the Word. Thus, every proclamation of the Word is a recapitulation of Jesus' "Follow me", which is the distinguishing mark of community. Barth states this mutuality of community and proclamation in a somewhat Calvinistic way:

To Christ there belong all His own--the totality of those elect in Him before the foundation of the world...To this Christ...there looks and moves His community to the extent that He is indeed proclaimed to it as such...²³⁵

Barth will not allow, however, that the Word is at work outside the confines of the community. We do allow this, but in so doing, we must make a distinction between signs and proclamations of the Word. Whenever alienation is momentarily overcome between two people in any walk of life, in any context of human intentionality, this overcoming is a work of the Word, what we choose to call a sign of the Word. We call it a sign of the Word because it could easily go unnoticed as an intervention of the Word. On the other hand, such a sign is never unnoticed completely. Whenever alienation between man and man is

²³⁵Ibid., IV/2, 624.

overcome, the people involved sense that something ultimate has happened. All missionary outreach of the church is in fact dependent on this realization. What we have here is the type of recognition of the woman at the well, who did not know Jesus, but saw that there was something extraordinarily penetrating about Him.²³⁶ It is the purpose of proclamations of the Word, on the other hand, to make such signs intelligible, and so make possible self-aware belief in the Word manifest in them; to this end the Word proclaimed within community becomes an intelligible sign, based on immediate power and scriptural antecedents.

The healing of all dialectical tension by the proclaimed Word can best be seen vis-a-vis man's fallenness and alienation from the Process. According to the account of the Fall in Genesis 3, man's fallenness resulted from inordinate desire to know good and evil, and so be like God,²³⁷ what we have designated as man's tendency toward self-absolutization. In man's fallenness, therefore, man knows good and evil, but from the outside, from a negative vantage point, from a point in which the knowledge of evil alienates him from the good which he knows, for his knowledge of evil is based on the taint of evil in himself (hence, the same of Adam and Eve in Gen.3:7). Thus, in man's fallenness man knows the good, but in a

²³⁶John 4:1-42.

²³⁷Genesis 3:5.

way that applies negatively to himself. Because man knows good and evil, he is alienated from himself, no longer able to call himself good. This good-evil dichotomy is overcome by the proclaimed Word, for when the Word is proclaimed, it is not proclaimed in reaction to the evil which man knows, but rather it is proclaimed at God's good pleasure as if there were no evil in man to be overcome--indeed, as if evil were non-existent because evil is non-existence. In the proclamation of the Word, especially in the final announcement of Grace in the second phase, the Word is addressed to man as if man were good and so gives man the capacity to affirm the good for himself, to affirm his true, created self.

This overcoming of the good-evil dichotomy by the proclaimed Word is made apparent by contrasting the preaching of John the Baptist, in whom this dichotomy must await a future resolution, and Jesus, the Resolver. In the Gospel of Matthew we find the following description of John the Baptist by Jesus:

Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and men of violence take it by force.²³⁸

The preaching of John the Baptist, and the prophets before

²³⁸Matthew 11:11-12, RSV.

him, proclaimed the kingdom of heaven in ways that made it unattainable to men, in ways that only underscored the good-evil dichotomy and so men's hopeless alienation from the kingdom and from themselves. And men's best response to such preaching was only to try to take the kingdom of heaven by force and fail. To this may be contrasted the description of Jesus the Christ which is given by Matthew's quotation of Isaiah:

Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom I am well-pleased. I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall proclaim justice to the Gentiles. He will not wrangle or cry aloud, nor will any one hear his voice in the streets; he will not break a bruised reed or quench a smoldering wick, till he brings justice to victory; and in his name will the Gentiles hope.²³⁹

Here the mood has shifted abruptly from the pattern of the prophets to one of peaceful resolution. In Jesus the kingdom is brought to within man's easy reach so that even the Gentiles can make it their own.

From this contrast we conclude that the proclamation of the Word evokes from man an attitude toward himself which is the opposite of self-degradation, one in which he no longer sees himself struggling to maintain himself in a bad light alongside of the good light of God that is always with him, but in which he now sees himself in that good light. From the proclamation of the Word, then, man

²³⁹Matthew 12:18-21, RSV.

is made whole and free from the encroachments of evil, for now evil has lost its fascination for him or its hold on him. In the place of man's dilemma of the good-evil dichotomy has been set a wholistic appreciation of the good.

From this it must not be concluded that the pre-resolution, via-negativa preaching exemplified by John the Baptist is of no account. For in John the Baptist, as well as in the negating affirmations which Paul uses in the early chapters of Romans, we find a necessary prelude to the proclamation of Grace, a prelude wherein God sets His authority and honor against the pretentiousness of man's unresolved knowledge of good and evil: here God meets head-on man's claim to be God by placing man on the wrong side of the good-evil dichotomy, about which man is otherwise so glib. Indeed, for evil men according to Jesus in Luke 11:29-32, there is only the preaching of repentance, rather than the announcement of Grace. Thus, the prophets must precede the apostles, John the Baptist must prepare the way for Jesus, Luther (by his own acknowledgment) must make way for Melancthon, and the Crucifixion must occur that the Resurrection can triumph. The proclaimed Word to men in the first stage of conversion must be contrasted in this way with the proclaimed Word to men in the second stage of conversion: the question of justification must be raised if the possibility of sanctification is to have

any impact; and the "wholly other" character of the Word must be the stand-point for broaching an understanding of the Word's merging with the Process.

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